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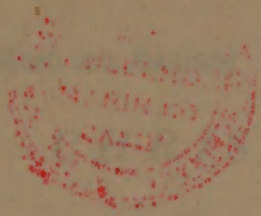

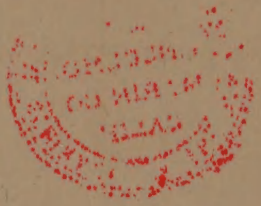

DISCOURSES

ON THE

MIRACLES AND PARABLES

OF OUR

Blessed Lord and Saviour

JESUS CHRIST.

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PREFACE.

THE reader is here presented with a set of *practical* Discourses on the MIRACLES and PARABLES of our blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST: designed at first wholly for the pulpit, and a popular congregation: but since revised, enlarged, and improved for the press: as it was judged they might be serviceable to the great cause of religion; and tend, in some degree to promote the true and only valuable interests of mankind.

The subjects treated of, are of such a nature as cannot fail greatly to engage the serious reflections of all, to whom they are presented: and serious reflections on such subjects, cannot fail much to influence every mind for its good. The author hoped, therefore, by introducing and recommending such to the public attention, he might be doing service, however he himself should succeed in the handling of them. If well, he clearly discerned the high advantage; if otherwise, high advantage he perceived must also arise to his readers, who by his discourses would be led to think more clearly on these important matters, to consult the sacred Scriptures more carefully, as well as those able authors, who have done greater justice to the glorious argument.

Discourses on the MIRACLES only were originally intended: and when these were first published, there was not the least design or apprehension of proceeding farther. But the pressing solicitation of so many, and those, a great part of them unknown to

the author, rendered it almost impossible for him to withdraw from the Public, and to refuse the discourses on the PARABLES, which accordingly followed.

I. As the *Discourses* were designed for a popular congregation, it is easy to see, that the author could not properly be led to consider the *Miracles* in a *controversial* manner: his chief view and aim was so to explain and enforce them, as to render them instructive and edifying to his hearers. But as to this end, it is highly needful, that any apparent difficulties in the letter, or any trite objections, raised in the school of infidelity, should be removed: he hath therefore endeavoured, in as brief and plain a manner as possible, to state the LITERAL facts: and to obviate real or supposed difficulties. It must be confessed that a right and clear stating of our Saviour's *Miracles* is of very prime consequence in the Christian System: since their evidence tends so much to confirm the truth of his divine mission and revelation.* Hence we find that the enemies of our common faith have ever been busy to weaken this evidence, and to shake this pillar of the heavenly building, against which however we are assured, *the gates of hell shall never prevail.* Nay, we cannot help observing the depth of DIVINE WISDOM, who, from that darkness which infidels and heretics would draw over his sacred word and works, hath caused the light of his truth to emerge with infinitely brighter lustre: and make the malice and perverseness of enemies, serve, by the labours of his faithful servants, to illustrate that very *revelation* which they meant to darken and decry.

Many instances hereof in other respects might be given: but a more evident one we cannot have, than

* See Bishop Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*, B. 2. c. 9. Dr. Patten's *Christian Apology*, and *two Defences*, in answer to Mr. Ralph Heathcote. And particularly *Occasional Annotations* the 28th in the 5th vol. of Parker's *Bibliotheca Biblia*, p. 683.

in the case of WOLSTON, whose infamous attacks upon our Saviour's *Miracles*, so far from gaining the end he proposed, served only to engage the thoughts and pens of the able servants of their Lord; and so to elucidate and undeniably confirm the evidence, he meant to confuse and overthrow.* Truth, like genuine gold, will always bear the touchstone, and appear the brighter the more it is examined.

From the excellent labours of our *Divines*, engaged in that controversy, I have reaped no small fruits: but have not attempted to handle the subjects in that view, which they have done: imagining it sufficient for my purpose, to obviate the general objections without producing them, and to refer to their labours, such as desire or need fuller information. I must confess, for my own part, that the custom of producing the objections of *infidels* or *heretics*, either from the *pulpit* or the *press*, (except when absolute necessity, or an immediate reply to an author calls for it) seems not the most eligible way of instructing, and frequently has, I fear, been attended with bad consequences. *Objections* are generally couched in a few strong and plain terms, and so are made level to every apprehension; the *answers* frequently and necessarily are long, laborious, and diffuse; and of consequence not apprehended with that strength and clearness, which is necessary totally to remove the ill impression.† For which reason the more plainly and simply truth is proposed, and the more covertly and *passingly*, if I may so say, objections are obviated, the less probability is there for prepossessions and prejudices to warp the mind.

* See Bishop Gibson's three excellent *Pastoral Letters*.

† For which reason Stackhouse's History of the Bible is a book so dangerous, and of so great prejudice to many. The *objections* there will be found more strongly and clearly expressed than the *answers*. The book would be of great use, were it possible to remove the *objections*, and to give the answers, without inserting the *objections* at all.

I have endeavoured to proceed thus in stating the *literal facts*, where necessary: but my design led me to be but brief, as having chiefly the *practical* use of the *Miracles* in view: and to this end, I have endeavoured to draw from them such *moral* and *spiritual* observations, as I hoped through grace, might tend to make men more in love with God and holiness.—Though the *chief* and *primary* intention of our Saviour's miracles is doubtless to confirm his divine mission; yet I presume, it cannot be denied, that they have other great and good purposes; amongst which, that which I have chiefly insisted on in the course of these Sermons claims a principal place, from the clear and undeniable testimony of innumerable writers of the first antiquity and credit. "His wonderful works and miracles in *nature*, were intended to display and prefigure his no less wonderful works and miracles in *grace*."* This I have attempted to shew in the course of the following Sermons on the *Miracles*.

The attempt of WOLSTON, whether more *weak* or *wicked*, it is difficult to say, hath brought up an evil report and much prejudice on the *spiritual* or *allegorical* interpretation of the *scriptures* in general, but the *miracles* in particular. *He* would have all our Saviour's miracles to be *merely allegorical*, to the utter destruction of the *literal* story. An absurdity, which one would conceive, need only have been proposed to confute itself. A desire to steer as clearly as possible from thie Scylla, hath perhaps driven some very learned men too near the opposite Charybdis: who while they have excellently supported the *literal story*, the sure *foundation* of all interpretation, have too hastily denied and excluded all *spiritual* or *allegorical* meaning; and of necessity have set themselves at opposition with the first and

* See the first Sermon, vol. i. see also p. 32, &c. of the same vol. and also vol. ii. p. 220, note.

most valuable writers of the church.† The truth in this, as in most other cases, lies in the midst. The *Miracles*, though strictly and truly *literal*, are not confined solely to the *letter:* though *spiritual* or *allegorical* in their interpretation, *are* not, *cannot* be solely *allegorical*. From the *literal* fact is derived the evidence for the truth of the divine revelation; in those facts, *spiritually* interpreted, are seen the most beautiful representations of Christ's miracles of mercy, and wonders of grace, vouchsafed to souls laden and oppressed, with all the weight and miseries of sin. Thus the ancient and best writers of the church have interpreted: never putting asunder those which are thus excellently connected. And while thus we proceed in their steps, preserving the literal story in its due honour, there is no fear of going greatly out of the way.*

II. The case is very different with the PARABLES: the outward letter is nothing more than the shell, the vehicle by which the purposed instruction is conveyed to us. So that to hear or read a parable without knowing the interpretation, is to *see* and *perceive* not, to hear and not understand. A *parable*, as I have had occasion elsewhere to observe,§ is a *similitude* or *comparison*, "a transferring the ideas or properties, which are in one subject, (generally familiar and well known) to another, less known and understood, in order to *heighten* and *enliven* that

† Dr. Pocock (*Not. Mis.* 176.) observes well, Multum certè omnibus seculis passa est veritas, a duobus, hominum generibus: altero eorum qui *omnia* in *allegorias*, & sensus, quos falso vocant *spirituales*, vertunt: altero eorum qui omnia *nude* ac *ad literam* exponunt, *&c.*

* The reader is by all means referred to a judicious and excellent preface of the learned Dr. Waterland, prefixed to the third edition of his *Scripture vindicated:* wherein he treats of the *literal*, *figurative*, and *mystical* (or spiritual) interpretation of scripture.

§ See vol. iv. the last of these Discourses, p. 300.

other the more to the mind."‡ It is a putting of one thing for another, that the matter intended to be taught may not immediately appear from the *bare letter* and the *case put:* but, when the key is given, strike more fully and strongly on the mind from the case put to represent and enforce it. For a *parable*, is exactly what we call "putting a case"—when one thing is said and supposed with a design to teach, illustrate, and enforce some other. And such are our Saviour's *parables:* so that to understand them we must look beyond the *letter;* and in such as he hath not himself interpreted, we shall either find the key from his *general application*, or from the connection wherein the *parable* stands, with his *miracles* or other discourses. And, while carefully attending hereto, we explain the other circumstances agreeably to the subject in hand and the *analogy of faith*, there is no doubt but we shall obtain all the profit, which was intended to be conveyed to us by this most pleasing, beautiful, and persuasive method of instruction.

That *parables* were very familiar and much in use among the Eastern nations, and particularly those of *Palestine* we learn not only from the testimony of St. Jerom, produced in the motto to the third volume of these discourses, but from the concurrent evidence of all writers on the subject. And for the most part, as an able writer* observes, "both Christ and his forerunner John, as well as the old prophets, were wont in their parabolical discourses to allude to

‡ See the reverend Mr. Merrick's sermon on *Christ the true Vine*, &c. Dr. Waterland in the Preface above mentioned, observes, that a parable is a kind of *similitude*, or *fictitious* parallel, taken up at pleasure to represent some real case. It is *a case in fiction* aptly made choice of, to signify some *case in fact*, be it supposed past, present, or future, *&c.* p. 9.

* Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel, p. 148. where he gives many examples, and speaks with great exactness on the subject. The note is too long to be inserted, and therefore the reader is referred to it.

things present, and such as immediately offered themselves." By this manner of teaching our Saviour fulfilled† the prophecies concerning the *Messiah* in this respect, of whom the Evangelist tells us it was foretold, that *he should open his mouth in parables, should utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world:* and hence it is, that the *mysteries* and *secrets* of the kingdom of heaven are generally the subjects of our Saviour's parables: his grand and fundamental doctrines being delivered in clear, plain, and express terms: *heightened* and *enlivened* however very often by the addition of beautiful *parables;* which as they are the most simple method of teaching,* and most accommodated to the comprehension of the vulgar and unlearned, most easy to be *understood, remembered,* and *applied:*§ so are they the finest veil for mysteries, and the best means to convict the proud and obstinate sinner, as well as to conceal from him those great truths, which his perverseness and infidelity have rendered him unworthy to have more clearly communicated to him. And this seems to be the reason which our Saviour himself gave to his disciples, why he spoke in parables: *The disciples came and said to him, Why speakest thou unto them in Parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath*

† I humbly conceive the blessed Jesus did not do such and such things *merely* and *solely* to fulfil the *prophecies;* but rather the prophecies foretold these things, *because* he was to do them, for other and good reasons. See Bishop Chandler's *Defence of Christianity, from the Prophecies of the Old Testament,* c. 3. and 6. sect 2. and 3.

* The words of Erasmus, as produced in the motto to the fourth volume of these discourses.

§ This is the reason given by Dr. Markland, in his first Discourse, vol. i. which see.

not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, &c. as if our Saviour had said, (to use Dr. Goodman's§ paraphrase,) "You my disciples, who are of an humble docible temper, and are content to use means and to resort to me for the understanding of such things as I deliver: to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are clothed in parables: for (besides that I am ready to interpret every thing to you) my discourses are so ordered, as to become plain and intelligible to such unprejudiced minds, the truth will shine through the veil, and the shadow shall guide you to the body and substance. But as for these proud and self-conceited Pharisees, that are transported with their own prejudices, and will neither understand nor practise things plainly delivered: for the just hardening them and such as they are, I deliver myself in such a manner, as will not readily be apprehended by men of their temper. They shall choke themselves with the husks, while you feed upon the kernel." They have brought this willing blindness upon themselves, that in seeing, they see not; and this wilful deafness, that in hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.*

§ In his *Penitent pardoned*, p. 12. where he enlarges on the reasons why our Saviour spoke in parables. "Much like to this, says he, at the end of the above paraphrase, is the account which Jamblichus gives of the obscurity of Pythagoras. *Pythagoras,* saith he, *studied some obscurity in his dictates, to the intent that those only who were virtuously disposed, and so prepared for his notions, might be benefited by his discourses, but as for others, they* (*as* Homer *saith of* Tantalus) *should be surrounded with such things as were in themselves desirable, but not be able to touch or taste them.*

* See Bishop Hall's Paraphrase on the text, in his Explication of difficult Texts: but above all, Dr. Whitby's very excellent and elaborate note on the place deserves the reader's most careful perusal. Mr. Macknight labours to establish a new interpretation, which it must be owned is a good one, if the words would

Upon the whole then, we may say, that our Saviour spoke in *parables*, 1. As a judicial punishment upon those, who were hardened against, and ill-disposed to the truth: and sometimes as a more lively means to convince and confute them, even from their own mouths.† 2. As a means to awaken the attention and whet the inquiry of those who were well-disposed; and to lead them to a serious examination and diligent searching after the truth: and as a method the most natural, beautiful, and instructive, to teach from common and familiar objects the most divine and important lessons, to imprint them on the memory. 3. As a veil to the mysteries of the kingdom, and a method least offensive to convey some very ungrateful and unpalatable truths,* such particularly as the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the *Gentiles*, &c. 4. As a lesson of man's natural blindness, and ignorance in spiritual matters, unless Christ, by his grace, is pleased to open the understanding, and enlighten the mind—add all this, 5. To fulfil the prophecies concerning him, in this respect, as well as to comply with the customs and manners of the nation, with whom this method of instruction was familiar.§

III. In interpreting the PARABLES, as well as in explaining the MIRACLES, I have spared no pains to arrive at the truth: my method has always been diligently and carefully to consider the original, to collate and confer Scripture with Scripture, for which, the marginal references of our Bible, and those of Dr. Mill,‡ are highly useful: this done, I have made

bear it, but it is feared they will not: and Dr. Doddridge seems fully to have refuted it beforehand. See them on the text.

† See vol. iv. of these Discourses, p. 99.

* Stanhope's Epistles and Gospels, vol. ii. p. 230, and vol. iii. p. 200.

§ See Dr. Lightfoot, vol. i. p. 229. and ii. p. 293.

‡ The *Amsterdam* edition by *Westein* abounds with the most copious and best selected marginal readings: Canne has collect-

it my business to consult the best and ablest critics and commentators, ancient and modern: as well as the writings of the first, and most approved fathers of the church, reaping from them all possible advantage. Our own writers on the New Testament generally succeeded these, in my inquiries: and after them any that I could find, who had treated the subject in hand. From each of which having derived all the information and profit I was able, it has been my endeavour under the assistance of divine grace, to express my sentiments, as clearly, plainly, and strongly, as I might: not considering myself as writing for the learned, but for the instruction of the *many*, with whom it is necessary, to use more words, to be more diffuse—to deliver *line upon line, and precept upon precept*—than if we were speaking to those whose education and studies lead them to such inquiries, and make them of much quicker discernment and penetration.

It was once my design to have translated and prefixed Ader's useful Discourse on our Saviour's Miracles: wherein that learned and pious physician fully proves, that every disease cured by our Redeemer was *incurable* by all the means of art: but my compass would not allow me: I cannot however but recommend the work to the perusal of those, who are engaged in these studies.* Nor must I omit here to make my acknowledgments for the very large assistance I have received from the excellent *Harmony* of the Gospels, begun in Latin by M. Chemnitz, a learned Lutherian divine, continued by Polycarp Lyser, and finished by the labour of the celebrated Dr. John Gerhard: the book is far less known than its usefulness demands: and when I first met with it,

ed a great many in his *Bible*, but frequently without much judgment. Clark has selected the *best*, in his Bible with brief Annotations. *Folio.*

* It is to be found at the end of the 6th volume of the *Critici Sacri (Amsterdam* edition.)

I found but few of my learned or scriptural acquaintance, who had any knowledge of it. There is in it a great fund of divine instruction, and many of our *Harmonists*, though they have not thought fit to say so much, have evidently been much indebted to it. For my own part, I have received singular pleasure and profit from it; and very frequently translated large paragraphs, for which, I hope, the present performances will not be found the worse. Thus much I conceived myself bound to declare in gratitude to my author, and good-will to my worthy brethren of the clergy, who may chance not to be acquainted with the *Harmony* of Chemnitz.

Many of these *Discourses*, not to say most of them, have in the transcribing and revisal of them been very much enlarged: and so are become longer than the generality of *sermons:* but since they may be considered as a kind of *Comment* as well as *Discourse*, on the portions of Scripture which they handle, it is hoped, their length will easily be pardoned—That the same thoughts and expressions are not repeated in them, the author by no means avers: it is indeed scarce to be avoided on subjects so similar; and the pious reader, we trust, will not be offended thereat, should it not be found to disgust him with a nauseating frequency. That many expressions might not be altered for the better, many sentences expressed with greater clearness and precision, and many words used with greater propriety and emphasis, the author again is so far from denying, that he is very sensibly convinced of it.

But if he cannot plead an exemption from a sameness of thought and expression, from literal impropriety or error, nor perhaps from mistakes in judgment: since to *err is human*, and infallibility only the property of the ALL-WISE:—yet he can plead an absolute exemption from all *voluntary* error, from all design to obtrude any opinions of his own, from any intention to favour one doctrine or recommend

one principle which has not its *clear* foundation in the *Word of God*, and the doctrine of that *church*, whereof he had the *happiness* to be a minister: and the *satisfaction*, to believe most exactly conformable, in its *doctrines* and *services*, to the *holy Scriptures*, and the faith of the *primitive church*. And he hopes and prays, that he may never receive or embrace any doctrine whatsoever, which cannot be evidently proved from that *word*, and shewn to be agreeable to the faith of the church of Christ, in the *first three centuries;* and so to the faith of the church of England, which had happily retained all the *fundamentals* of the Christian doctrine. It would be far better, if all were wise enough to follow the excellent advice given in one of our *Canons* in the reign of queen Elizabeth, in the year 1571: "That the clergy should teach nothing from the pulpit, as being of religious obligation to the people to believe, but what should be consonant to the doctrine of the Old, or New Testament, and what the catholic *fathers* and *ancient bishops* had collected or concluded from thence." How would both *truth* and *learning* flourish, as the great Dr. Waterland remarks, were but this rule carefully observed? Men that know *little* of the *fathers* will of course speak with contempt of them. They were *men*, it is true, but they were withal *great* and *good* men: a character which those will never arrive at, who presume to flout or despise them."* Were but the rule above mentioned carefully observed, all our differences would soon be composed: and those opinions and tenets which so divide the church, and destroy brotherly love, would soon be found not capable of enduring the trial, and so of necessity be given up. We cannot, it is true, contend too earnestly for the *fundamentals* of our common faith; but the great misfortune is, that our

* See Dr. Waterland's Remarks upon Dr. Clark's Exposition of the Church Catechism. p. 23.

disputes and divisions frequently arise from points not *fundamental*, or rather from that, which we cannot too strenuously oppose, from mens making those things *fundamental*, which really are not so.† "In the rule above given, we ought to abide and there to fix our firm footing: every departure from it will be a departure, so far, from truth, and sobriety: which if carried on, but a little way, will do mischief; but if pursued to the utmost (as it is natural for a spirit of error to be restless) can end in nothing else but the most deplorable confusion." And surely this is not a time for Christians to promote that confusion, to fall out and contend by the way: but to agree and unite all their endeavours towards the repelling the common enemy, and promoting the cause of Christ: which through the boldness of *infidelity* on one hand, and the imprudence of *enthusiasm* on the other, is brought into imminent danger; and calls for the joint and zealous *labours* of all those, who profess themselves *labourers* in the Lord's vineyard.

† For an excellent discourse upon *Fundamentals*, I would refer my reader to *Two Charges* delivered to the Middlesex clergy, by Dr. Waterland, so often mentioned and quoted in these Discourses. He observes (from Sherlock's *Vindication* of the Defence of *Stillingfleet*) p. 14. that "a *fundamental doctrine* is such a doctrine as is in strict sense of the *essence* of Christianity, without which the whole building and superstructure must fall: the belief of which is necessary to the very being of Christianity, like the *first principles* of any *art* or *science*."—The next step we advance to, and which bears an immediate connection with the former, is; that such doctrines as are found to be *intrinsical* or *essential* to the *Christian Covenant* are *fundamental truths*, and such as are plainly and directly subversive of it, are *fundamental errors*.—The *Christian* Covenant may be considered as containing the following articles; 1. A founder and principal covenanter. 2. A subject capable of being covenanted. 3. A charter of foundation. 4. A mediator. 5. Conditions to be performed. 6. Aids or means to enable to performance. 7. Sanctions also, to bind the covenant and secure obedience." The Doctor then enlarges upon each of these, and examines at large all *other* rules for fundamentals, and shews them defective. See the work.

It is in support of this glorious cause, that I have reached out my—alas—too feeble hand: willing, like the poor widow to throw in, at least, my mite, though inconsiderable, into the treasury, towards building up the spiritual house of the Lord.‡ And having no *sect* to establish, no *party* of any kind to espouse, no *peculiar principles*, but the plain precepts of the Gospel, to recommend:—I cannot but flatter myself, that the ingenuous and unbigotted part of mankind will receive my labours with complacence: and pardon at least the well-meant, should they be found, fruitless endeavours of sincerity.—It is *ungenerous*, not to say highly *unjust*, to cast our random censures, and to play with the reputation of a *clergyman*, merely because he happens to be in earnest, and to press the cause of his divine Master, and of the eternal welfare of his fellow creatures, with some degree of that zeal and importunity, which the greatness of the subjects surely so much demand. Yet thus unjust, thus ungenerous are many: doing they know not what injury to the religion of Christ, by robbing his minister of their due influence, and prejudicing the souls of his hearers, by ill opinions of the doctrine he delivers.

The following Sermons, together with the general tenour of my *preaching*, and the manner of my life, which I strive, through God's grace, to lead void of offence towards him, and towards man,—will, I trust, on my own behalf, serve sufficiently to remove all such aspersions; and to convince those, whom it may concern, that as closely and strictly attached to our excellent church, I have ever disapproved the practice and distinguishing tenets of our modern sectaries: and hope to live and die in the *faith* and *unity* of the truly *apostolical* church, planted by

‡ The gifts cast into the treasury, Theophylact informs us, were intented not only for the relief of the poor, but for sacred uses, and for *adorning* the Temple, ως κοσμον του Ναυ.

God's good providence in these realms. Thus much I conceived myself bound to declare, in justice to the church, whereof I am a minister; in justice to my worthy friends and hearers, in the parishes wherewith I am connected, whom I bear in my heart, and whose everlasting welfare I greatly long for: and in justice to myself, whose *honesty* or *understanding*, must, I humbly apprehend, be otherwise greatly called in question. If after this most public declaration, any shall think fit so far to favour the *Sectaries*, as to suppose me an encourager of them; to themselves be the reproach: it cannot reach me: not but I must justly esteem it, amongst those *evil-speakings*, which our Saviour pronounces *blessed* to those, on whom they fall *for his sake:* and they can fall on me only *for his sake*, for boldly, truly, and at all times speaking his word. And in *such reproach*, God forbid that I should do other than glory! Every honest sectary, if true to his own principles, while he *disclaims* and *pities* me, should yet approve and esteem me for this declaration: since, upon his own principles, every man is bound to be *zealous* and *sincere:* and we may challenge any of them to shew, wherein the church of England is deficient in any *fundamental* of the Christian Faith.

But alas, this will not do: nothing like division and disunion in the church tends to destroy that divine *love*, which leads us to *rejoice* even in the smallest glimmer of the *truth:* wheresoever seen, wheresoever found: in whatever professor, or disciple of this sacred school. And we find, the prejudice of narrow-minded principles so great, that a disagreement in some favourite tenet is sufficient to cause men to disparage the whole of another's performance, however otherwise consonant to their own principles. *Such* will do well to consider, that they act little like the disciples, and far less like the *ministers* of Christ. But be they left to their own consciences,

while we sincerely wish them more knowledge, and more of that *love, which rejoiceth in the truth.*

But while we wish it to others, let it be your chief care and mine, O reader, to implant that divine love in our own breasts. It is this alone which will *never fail* us; without this you may read and hear, and I may preach and print for ever, and yet be no wise acceptable in the sight of God. Let us therefore lay aside all other strifes; and strive only, who shall love his neighbour most, and so most approve himself to that *God*, who hath commanded us *to love one another as he hath loved us.* If these or any other labours of mine, shall be found conducive to this great end, I shall then not have lived in vain: and the Searcher of hearts knoweth, that I desire to live no longer, than while I can promote that great end. In which, if he is pleased to bless the very least of his servants, be all the glory to him: in which if he is pleased to bless others, by my weak means, be his again the glory, mine their constant prayers, and theirs the everlasting, the unspeakable reward! *Amen.*

W. DODD.

PLAISTOW, *Essex*,
Aug. 25, 1757.

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ON THE

MIRACLES

OF OUR

Blessed Lord and Saviour

JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. Matt. xi. 4, 5, 6.

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DISCOURSES, &c.

DISCOURSE I.

THE EASINESS OF CHRIST'S YOKE.

MATTHEW xi. 28—29.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

IF the greatness of the Speaker, if the importance of his message, if the affectionate manner of his address, are at all times sufficient to engage the attention of the hearer, surely the passage I have read to you, above all others, must demand your most serious and particular regard. It is Christ, the almighty Redeemer, the Son of the Most High; he into whose hands as our mediator, all things are delivered of his Father; he unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given, who yet in himself is God equal with the Father, God of God, and light of light; even he who shall come in the

clouds to judge all the ends of the earth; nay, and who shall judge them by* those very words which he himself delivered;—It is this wonderful person who *speaks*, declaring at once his great willingness to receive, and his own supreme power† to give that rest and peace to the soul, which is the pursuit of every son of Adam, and which is the gift of his religion only: *For no man*, saith he, *knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* And his invitation is important, containing the sum of the whole gospel, *glad tidings* indeed to every oppressed and heavy-laden soul. That nothing may deter us from accepting it, see with what *affectionate tenderness* he invites to him, not the great,§ the happy, and the powerful, not the merry-hearted, and the sons of joy, but *all that labour, and are heavy-laden*, all that are under the bondage of sin and sorrow: And he calls them, not with a desire to manifest their miseries, to punish their offences, or to display his own glory, but solely with a view to their happiness and salvation. "*Come*, says he, *come to me, I* entreat *and* advise *you to come, and behold I will give you rest;* I myself will relieve and release you from your heavy burdens; come to me, and ye shall find perfect rest and peace

* See John xii. 48.

† He manifests here his own supreme power and authority, in that he does not say as Moses and the Prophets, *Come unto the Lord, and he will give you*, &c. or the *Lord hath said, Come*, &c. *but Come unto* ME, *and I will give you*, &c. *I whom the Father hath sealed, besides whom there is no Saviour*, none other *able* or *willing to save.* For there *is salvation in no other.* See Isaiah xliii. 11. Acts iv. 12. *And all things*, saith he, *are delivered unto me of my Father*, &c. Matt. xi. 27.

§ In the 25th verse of this chapter, Father I thank thee, says Jesus, that thou hast hid these things from the *wise* and *prudent*, and hast revealed them unto BABES. See 1 Cor. i. 26, and the following verses.

to your souls." The world* says, Come to me, and I will fail you; the flesh says, Come to me, and I will destroy you; Christ says, Come to me and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, *for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

"Oh most grateful burden, (says St. Chrysostom) which more comforts them that carry it; the burdens of earthly masters gradually wear out the strength of those who bear them; but the burden of Christ more assists the bearer of it, because we carry not grace, but grace us."

And can it be possible, that creatures of a day like us, can it be possible, that mortals,‖ *who have but a short time to live, and are full of misery, who come up and are cut down like a flower, who flee, as it were a shadow, and never continue in one stay;* can it be possible that they should reject and disregard a call so full of love, so full of affection, of such infinite consequence, of such unspeakable advantage? Can they reject the love of him, who, to give them *rest*, took their burdens upon himself; who, to deliver them from bondage, became himself a slave; and who, after all his sufferings, desires them only to *come*, to take his easy yoke, instead of their own oppressive burden; to leave sin and sorrow, and to become his disciples; to love and obey him, and so to be happy? Can it be possible that we should despise such grace, refuse such proffers, fly from rest thus freely proposed to us, and choose instead to bear the heavy yoke of sin, and to labour beneath the oppressive load of an unappeased and unquiet conscience?—Oh, that we would all consider, that we would well weigh the infinite gain of an unreserved approach to Christ, of freely taking his easy yoke and light

* See St. Barnard. *Mundus clamat, ego deficiam, &c.*

‖ See Job xiv. 1, 2, and the Burial Service.

burden upon us; then should we soon discover that the *loss* thereby sustained, would be by far the greater part of the *gain;* for the loss would be only of trouble and grief, the gain entirely of rest and repose.

But present objects strike so strongly on the human sight, that we have no eyes for spiritual things, removed from the view of sense, and seen only by the eye of faith; And though in reality, every man born of woman, is thus *heavy-laden* and oppressed, though all men are not only sinners, but also afflicted with many outward evils to remind them thereof, (for* nothing upon earth is perfectly happy, and death at least is an universal monitor of sin to all mankind) though all are really thus heavy-laden; yet while *the things that are seen* chiefly engross our attention, the inward malady of the soul is but little heeded: soon as it pleases God in his wisdom to scourge and chasten us, soon as our kind Father lays his correcting hand upon us, then, for the most part—burdened with worldly afflictions, *temporal things* no longer capable of amusing and engaging us,—then, we turn our eyes inward; then the spiritual grievances of our souls appear to us, and then we are glad and willing to embrace Christ's proposal of rest and repose.

* It required no Revelation to teach this; all mankind from the Fall have had sufficient proof of it from their own experience, and a heathen poet could say,

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum. HOR. lib. II. ode 16.

Nothing is completely blest. FRANCIS.

But how beautifully is it set forth by Solomon, in his divine writings, than whom no man had greater opportunities to prove the extent of all human happiness, and the sum of his experience is this, *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* Eccles. i. 2.

Here we see the great* advantage of affliction: For that must be highly advantageous, which causes the soul to come to Christ; and none *can come*, for none are invited, but the *labouring and heavy-laden.*

Hence we find in the gospel, that all, who came to Jesus, for relief, did labour and were heavy-laden, were oppressed with the burdens of sin and sorrow, and so brought to him: and each one of them was intended to point out to us, not only the proper manner of coming to Christ, but also those spiritual maladies, that *spiritual leprosy* and *possession*, that spiritual blindness, deafness, dumbness, deadness, yea, that deprivation of all spiritual health and soundness, and that utter inability to every good work, which are, to corrupt human nature, the unhappy consequences of our first parents' transgression. And, as I propose to enlarge upon these examples, it seemed not improper, and I hope, will not be unprofitable to introduce my

* Dr Young has beautifully enlarged upon this truth, in words which every christian must feel.

> Great God of wonders, (if thy *love* survey'd
> Aught else the name of wonderful retains)
> What rocks are these on which to build our trust!
> Thy ways admit no blemish: none I find.
> Or this alone, "*That none is to be found.*"
> Not one to soften *censures* hardy crime,
> Not one to palliate peevish grief's *complaint:*
> Who, like a Demon, murm'ring from the dust,
> Dares into judgment, call her judge—SUPREME.
> For all I bless thee; most for the *severe:*
> *Her death, my own* at hand, the fiery gulf,
> That flaming bound of wrath omnipotent!
> It thunders; but it thunders to preserve:
> It strengthens what it strikes: its wholesome dread
> Averts the dreaded pain: its hideous groans
> Join heav'n's hallelujahs in thy praise,
> Great source of good alone!—How kind in all?
> In vengeance, kind! *Pain, death, Gehenna, SAVE.*
>
> *Night Thoughts,* Consolation.

intended discourses, with this pathetic invitation of our Lord; wherein, we see that ALL are invited to him, and that all are in a proper state to *come*, when *labouring and heavy-laden.*

In speaking to these words, three particulars naturally occur to our observation: First, in them we have an *invitation*, Come *unto* ME; Secondly, the persons invited, those, who will be the acceptable guests, All ye *that labour* and are *heavy-laden;* and, Thirdly, what such shall receive, namely, *rest*, and what they must do, in order to the receiving it, who come to Christ as their Priest, Prophet and King, to be saved, taught, and ruled by him; *I will give you rest*, on condition that you *come to* me, *Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart; so shall ye find rest to your souls; rest* to your *souls*, by *learning* of me and taking my *yoke* upon you, *for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* In which, as well as in the *coming* to Christ, is set forth the duty of those, who are invited, or what they must do on their parts, who desire rest to their souls from him: since very vain and deceitful will all hopes of *rest* be found to such as do not *come* to Christ, as do not *take his yoke* upon them, and *learn* of him, to be *meek and lowly in heart.*

I. First then, here is an invitation, *Come to Me;* the word in the original* Δευτε, *come*, expresses not so much a *command*, as a *friendly request;* a familiar exhorting, begging and desiring that we would do

* Leigh, in his Critica Sacra, observes: *Est hoc adverbium hortantis simul & accersentis; usurpatur ab illis qui humanissime incitant & hortantur ad aliquid faciendum: imprimis autem quæ sunt grata & jucunda.* Chemnitius also in his Harmony makes the same remark. To him I am indebted for many excellent observations, nay, and indeed for much matter, as the learned reader will see in the course of these sermons, as I have fully acknowledged in the *general preface.*

any thing, particularly what is pleasant and profitable to us: as much as to say, Come, I pray, I advise and beseech you. And in this view, the love of Christ is exceedingly magnified, "Come, says he, come, I beseech, I earnestly exhort, I advise and entreat you, as your best friend, *come* unto *me;* unto *me*, who came into the world solely to call you to repentance and life; unto *me*, who invites you only to bestow rest and peace and joy upon you; unto *me*, who am ever ready and willing to receive you; unto *me*, who am your only hope, rock and trust; to whom, whosoever *cometh*, he shall in no wise be cast out; in whom whosoever *believeth*, he shall never die, but have everlasting life, *For he that* COMETH *to me shall never hunger, and he that* BELIEVETH *on me shall never thirst.*"*

And upon encouragement like this, what should keep thee back?—What, oh man, should detain thee from coming to this Lord, when thus he not only invites, but so unbounded is his love, so great his desire of thy soul's eternal health, thus pressingly entreats, thus familiarly advises thee to come to him? To *him*, who has all *power* in heaven *and in earth*—Well may we rejoice in such an advocate and ransom;—to him who hath the keys of death and of hell, *who openeth, and no man shutteth, who shutteth, and no man openeth.*

But that none may deceive themselves, or expect that the Father should reveal the Son to them, should give them rest from sin here, or from its wages hereafter; you find our Lord offers his rest upon this condition or necessary qualification only, that *we do indeed come to him.* Unless we *come*, we can never expect to be received, unless we *seek*, we can

* See St. John xi. 25, 26. and vi. 35, 36, 37, *&c.* Whoever carefully reads this chapter, as well as the next, of this evangelist, cannot want to be informed, that *coming* to *Christ* is used as an equivalent term to *believing* in him.

never hope to *find.* This is our part: And as the poor afflicted blind, and lame, deaf and dumb, *&c. came* to *Christ* in person, when present upon earth; so now must we, afflicted with spiritual evils, *come* by faith, to him our great mediator, *whose ears are ever open to our prayers, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us,* in heaven. He is the same Lord equally willing to hear, equally ready and able to save: the same yesterday, to-day and for ever: and *whenever* we *come* to him by sincere faith, hungering and thirsting after his righteousness, heavy-laden and labouring under our burden, desiring, seeking, asking, believing; most certain it is, that his divine promise will be made good to us; we shall be comforted by that blessed Spirit, *who is the very comforter,** *and thus find rest to our souls. For heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of his word and faithful* promise *shall not pass away.*†

As thus we can receive nothing from him, unless we *come* to him, so shall we not desire to receive *rest* from him, unless we feel a want of it. They who are perfectly at ease, the world at peace with them, and they well satisfied with themselves, *in whose land no mighty famine* hath yet *arisen;* they who are under no remorse for sin, no terrors for its punishment; who either think it no burden, or expect to be justified by their own merits and deservings without the blood of a Redeemer:—These, as experiencing no *want* of rest, can have no longing desires for it, and of consequence will never *come* to Christ to seek and sue for it; wherefore we find that this invitation is made.

II. Only to those that *labour and are heavy-laden;* but to ALL of these, Come unto me, *all* ye

* See the second hymn in the *Ordering of the Priests.*

† See St. Matt. v. 18. xxiv. 35.

that labour, *&c.* and as all men are sinners, and so *heavy-laden,* whether they feel and confess it or not, this invitation, like redemption, is universal, and extended to all mankind; a word of inexpressible comfort to every afflicted and heavy-laden soul; and a sufficient answer to all the espousers of that horrible doctrine of election and reprobation, which supposes the grace of God *denied* to some, and *confined* only to those who are elect from the beginning according to some *secret* and *hidden* decree of God. To all such impious positions, which make the God of *love,* a God of the greatest injustice, these sweet and refreshing words of our Lord are a sufficient, and perhaps the best, reply,—*Come unto me, all—all ye that labour and are heavy-laden,* I except, I reject none, for *every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* He invites not *the rich,* and the full, *the increased with goods, that have need of nothing,* but those that see and acknowledge themselves to be *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* From these he removes all scruples of unworthiness, " Bring but your burdens, saith he, to me, however oppressed with guilt, however laden beneath the weight and misery of sin, come only to me as your *advocate* and *propitiation,* come only in true trust, *confessing your sins,* and ye shall find me *faithful and just to forgive them;* cast all your burdens upon me, *on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquity of you all,* receive my counsel, *and buy of me gold tried in the fire to make you rich, white raiment that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear, anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see*—draw near with faith, take my yoke upon you, learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls; for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, I

came to seek the lost sheep, to receive the returning prodigal."

Christ in these words invites, First, those who were burdened and oppressed beneath the weight of the legal ceremonies, which St. Peter calls, *a yoke that neither our fathers nor we were able to bear,*§ and who from the *law* could find no reconciliation with God, no rest to their own consciences, as having this dreadful sentence always thundering in their ears, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Secondly, Those whose consciences so labour and struggle beneath the burden of sin, the wrath of God, and the fear of future judgment, that their heart and spirit is bent down and oppressed, that they go mourning all the day long, and find no remedy to heal, no means to relieve their wounded souls. And, Thirdly, those who labour beneath the burden of troubles, of outward or inward afflictions, so that they can obtain no worldly comfort; but at length broken in spirit, humble and contrite in heart, are led to the knowledge of their sins as the *cause*, and the love of Jesus as the cure of them. This is the great use of afflictions, which unless thus sanctified, become the heaviest of burdens to us; and as none of us live without afflictions and troubles of some sort or other, more or less, without some kind chastisements and correcting calls from our heavenly Father; herein is our wisdom to see and consider them in this view,—as loving rebukes, an happy means to bring us unto him, who hath promised *rest* to all the *labouring* and *heavy-laden*, that *come* to him for it; and who hath said, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*

None have either will or power to come to Christ but such as are thus burdened: These, by whatever means God hath been pleased to *draw* them to

§ Acts xv. 10. and it is called Gal. v. 1. the *yoke of bondage.*

him, and to open *their hearts*, by his grace and good Spirit; by whatever means he hath been pleased to convince them of sin, and of their own vileness, of the vanity of earthly, and the immense value of eternal things: These alone will come to him, these alone are entitled to his offers; and these alone are they, who delivered from their present burden, shall find present* rest to their souls in peace of conscience here, and future rest in everlasting peace with God in heaven. For this,

III. Is what our Lord promises to give; and the greatness of his gift, as it can be prized by none, but those who really experience the want of it, so will it be ever sufficient to draw every labouring and heavy-laden soul to him. For what so sweet as rest to the weary? what so grateful as refreshment to the hungry and thirsty soul? what so delicious as a cooling shelter from the scorching sun, as the pure fountain to the panting hart.‖ Sweeter, far sweeter than all of these, far more delicious and grateful, wronged by every similitude, and infinitely above all comparison is the sense of God's forgiving love in Christ, is the sense of his freedom from the yoke and burden, the slavery and guilt of sin, is the sense of his acceptance in the *Beloved*, to the soul long labouring under the oppression of iniquity, heavy-laden beneath the burden of condemning guilt, the dread of its eternal wages! And this *rest* Christ offers to *all*§ who will come to him:

* Christ is to us in reality, yea, and to all the Patriarchs and Prophets, that which Noah was in figure—our *rest* and *consolation*. For Lamech called his son's name *Noah*, saying, *This same shall* COMFORT *us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed*, Gen. v. 29.

‖ David beautifully cries out, *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?* Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

§ It is a delightful reflection to every soul, that the grace of

who will come burdened and heavy-laden, take his yoke upon them, *his easy yoke and light burden, learn of him, meek and lowly* as he is, and so obtain perfect peace and perfect consolation.

We may observe here how excellently the wisdom of God is displayed in the salvation of sinners: for sin is of itself the greatest evil, and, if unrepented of, will constitute the worst part of hell: if we are not *saved* from it here, we *can*‖ never enter into hea-

God is thus freely offered, that *all* have in their power, if they will use the due means to obtain eternal life. How different a view of the Father of mercies, and the gospel of peace doth this give us, from the shocking and presumptuous light in which both are represented by the maintainers of particular election and reprobation! May the God of power silence all such doctrines amongst us! and as no improper antidote, I subjoin the following passage from the excellent Bishop Beveridge's sermon on the *Christian race.* "In this he (God) would have all run so as to obtain it; this being such a prize, that not only one, but all may have it, that will but run aright for it; for God is no respecter of persons, he would *have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth,* 1 Tim. ii. 4. and accordingly, *he so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life,* John iii. 16. He excepts against no man; but every one of you may as certainly be a glorified saint in heaven hereafter, as he is now in this place, if it be not his own fault. God permits, he invites, nay, he commands you all to *run,* so as to obtain eternal life, and therefore if any of you miss it, they must blame themselves for it; and so they will when it is too late; they will blame themselves to all eternity for being such fools and madmen, as to lose such a glorious prize, which once they might have had, but would not. The remembrance whereof will be a great aggravation of the misery, that you will then suffer by your own default.—This is a thing much to be observed, and I wish you would always carry it in your minds, even that whatsoever your outward condition may be at present you are all as yet in a capacity of obtaining the crown of glory. This prize is set before you ALL, and you are all, and every one required to run so as to obtain."

‖ Very emphatical are our Saviour's words to Nicodemus, John iii. 3. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he* cannot *see the kingdom of God.* He doth not say, he *shall* not, he *must* not—But he *cannot,* while unregenerate he is not in a capacity either for the gospel kingdom, or the kingdom

ven hereafter: for such as are our passions and desires when we depart hence, such they will be found when we rise again: since there is no repenting in the grave, no possibility of any future change, if we neglect the present proffers of grace, the present means of regeneration. So that Christ offers to deliver us from sin, as the greatest evil, and as our sure obstacle to bliss: and that by making us first sensible of it, then leading us to a sufficient atonement for it, then giving us a rule whereby to walk, which tends immediately to throw down all the strong holds of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to fit us for the enjoyment of God and the fellowship of beatified spirits—*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

To enlarge a little on this point:—Sin is a grievous and oppressive burden: its service is perfect slavery, the hardest and worst of service it is, *to serve divers lusts and passions, to live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another:* But when once the sinner's eyes are opened, and his heart begins to *condemn* him, when once he sees the guilt and misery of this state, and knows that the wages of sin are death; when once he feels the heavy bondage, and finds that a guilty conscience is its own hell; when once he sees a good and merciful God set at an everlasting distance from him, and a bleeding loving Redeemer crucified by his enormous iniquities; when once he beholds the joys of Paradise separated for ever, separated from his approach and blackness, eternal blackness of darkness, reserved for impenitent offenders—when once these reflections lay hold of the conscience, and these terrors of the Lord make the stout hearts to tremble,

of glory; how *can* a proud, a drunken, an adulterous man have any pleasure, or perceive any joy in the pure love of God, and the chaste delights of the blessed?

who can wonder that the load is well nigh too heavy to be borne, that the burden of them is intolerable?—who can wonder that when a soul like this is led to the *fountain open for all uncleanness*,—when a soul like this is led to a Saviour, who is willing and able to remove this more than Ætnean* mountain from his breast,—who can wonder that in the sense of this love, and this full deliverance, he finds unspeakable rest, and in the change of his yoke, full repose to the soul? For the sinner that *comes* to Christ, sincerely desirous of this rest, must exchange the hard and heavy yoke of his former Egyptian task-masters for the *light and easy one* of his present Lord and Saviour: he must cease to sin, and learn to serve God: he *must take up Christ's cross*, become his disciple, believe his doctrine, submit to his discipline, and give himself up wholly to be ruled and governed by him—*must deny himself*, and *follow* his great exemplar. Thus alone can he *find* rest. For as faith must bring the sinner to Christ, that same faith must cause him to *walk as he hath walked, to keep his holy commandments;* the spirit of God working in him all those heavenly graces and tempers, which adorn and distinguish the Son of God, and heir of heaven, and which are to the soul the *seal* and *earnest* of its inheritance.†

* The Heathen fables relate, that the burning mountain Ætna was cast by Jupiter upon the rebellious giant Enceladus, concerning whom the poets, and amongst the rest the elegant Virgil speaks thus—

> On vast Enceladus this pond'rous load
> Was thrown in vengeance, by the thund'ring god:
> Who pants beneath the mountain and expires,
> Through openings huge, the fierce tempestuous fires:
> Oft as he shifts his side, the caverns roar,
> With smoke and flame the skies are cover'd o'er,
> And all Trinacria shakes from shore to shore.
>
> Pitt, Æn. III.

† See Gal. iv. 22. Ephes. i. 13, 14. and iv. 30.

And therefore our Lord adds, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.* The sure and natural fruit of *meekness* and *lowliness* or humility, is *rest* and peace; of that *meekness* and *humility* which comprise almost the whole of our duty to God and to man;* teaching us such a perfect resignation and unfeigned submission to the will of the one as to be wholly satisfied with whatever he pleases; such an entire renunciation of self-will, and thorough contentment in every station, as to desire nothing but that the will of God may be done in us; and with regard to the other, teaching us so to prefer all men to ourselves, as to abound in mildness and love to the good; in gentleness, forbearance, and compassion to the evil and unthankful. These heavenly tempers were eminently found in our Lord, and he hath set us an example, nay and commanded us, to *learn* of him, meek, humble and lowly Lamb of God!—of him who was perfectly resigned to his Father's good pleasure, who came not to do, who desired not his *own will, but the will of him that sent him;* who was so particularly mild, so tender and compassionate, so gentle and patient, no less to the evil than the good. The nearer we approach to him in these divine tempers, the more *rest* we

* The learned Joseph Mede, in a sermon on this text, and on the part of it, where speaking of these words *meek* and *lowly*, observes, "Under these two words our Saviour comprehends the whole *habit of obedience*, they being two such dispositions of the mind, as make it tractable and pliable to put on and wear the yoke he speaks of. As if he had said, I am wholly qualified to obedience, I am fitted for this yoke: learn of me to put it on, for I am meek and lowly. Now though *lowliness* and *meekness* are of very near affinity, and such as both of them do dispose a man for the duties of both tables of God's commandments, yet hath lowliness, as I take it, a prerogative in our devotion to god-ward, and *meekness* is more proper for the duties we owe to our neighbour, &c." He enlarges upon these as the reader may see by consulting his sermon, p. 158 of his works.

shall obtain; for you observe, this meekness and humility, this resignation to God's will, and renunciation of our own, this patience, love and gentleness, are the very opposites to that self-sufficient pride and affectation of independency, that vanity, impatiency, and envy, that hatred and contempt of others, yea, and that love of every thing tending to sin,—to all and each of these which are the adequate causes of that abounding misery and burning uneasiness reigning and raging in the human breast.

And these are things which we may all easily learn, for the love of Christ herein is admirable; he doth not say, (as one of the fathers well observes) "Learn of me, for I am great and glorious:" he doth not say, "learn of me to make a world and to perform miracles‡," but he says, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart:* this we may all learn: and no man can say that these are graces and tempers, which he cannot imitate, and to which he cannot arrive; it is our own faults, if we do not copy herein his divine example: it is and must be our pride and vanity, our love of lust, of sin, and the world, which alone can keep us from being *meek* and *lowly* in *heart*. And in truth, when we reflect that such was the Son of God—*I am meek*, &c. what excuse shall we, poor sinful dust and ashes, have to make, what excuse shall pride, power, or place, what excuse shall greatness, pleasure or honour have to offer for themselves, if they disobey the will of God, become not meek and lowly in heart, when he *who made the worlds, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, hath in himself set the example, and made this the only road to present and eternal bliss?

I say the *only* road; for tho' Christ hath promised

‡ St. Ambrose and Austin.

us rest,—and his word can never fail: yet it is manifestly upon these conditions,* that we do, first, *come* to him, in sincere faith as the only redeemer of our souls, able and willing to save, as our only advocate and propitiation, as our only sure trust and confidence, truly deploring, heartily lamenting, and stedfastly resolving to forsake all our former sins and misdoings: that we do, secondly, *take his yoke upon us,* obey his doctrine and submit to his discipline, *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world:* that we do, thirdly, *learn of him,* follow the example of his meekness and lowliness, *walk as he walked, and purify ourselves even as he is pure.* If we do not on our parts perform these conditions uniting all our efforts, and seeking for continual aid and support from the throne of grace; with whatever hopes of present or future *rest* we may lull and delude our own souls, most infallibly

* It is to be hoped the word *conditions* will not disgust any *real* and *sincere* christians: that some may be offended at it, I neither doubt nor regard: some who are for following Christ so far as to *receive* from him, so far as unto the breaking of bread—but are not willing to hear what they *must do,* and *must have done* in them in *return*: if such should be offended, that I affirm the promises of *present* and *eternal rest* to be conditional, I shall not be surprised: Christians desirous to shew *their faith by their works,* I am sure will not; and to the others I cannot recommend a more proper remark, than this which I find in Dr. Waterland's preface to Blair's Sermons, p. 10 edit. 2d. "I am apprehensive that by our unwary confutation of the Popish errors, concerning *merit* and *supererogation,* we have too much depreciated *good works* themselves: whereas it is most certain they ought to be highly had in estimation: not only as the genuine *signs* and *fruits* of a lively faith, but as necessary *conditions* of *salvation:* and not only of *salvation,* but of our *growth* in grace, and our advancement to higher degrees of glory." Vol. i. Serm. 21. p. 374. For the justifying the term *conditions,* the reader who has any scruples, may consult Bishop Bull, in his *Harmonia,* &c. and Bishop Stillingfleet in his Answer to Mr. Lobb.

certain it is, we have no right to expect it from Christ: most infallibly certain it is, in the end we shall be found miserable deceivers of ourselves, which is of all deceits the worst.

But if on the contrary we do come to him in faith, and endeavour to the utmost of our poor ability to lead godly, righteous and sober lives; meek and lowly; resigned, patient and gentle; then we shall for ourselves experience the truth of his divine words—*my yoke is easy*,† *and my burden light*.

We shall then find that his yoke is easy and his burden light, not only in itself, but in comparison of all other yokes and burdens, beneath which we have groaned, as of the *law*, of *sin*, the *world*, and the *flesh*—and in freedom from which, through the truth‡ we shall no less rejoice than captives redeemed from the deep dungeons, and oppressive irons of blood-thirsty tyrants. We shall then find, that the *bearing of the* cross, and *denying ourselves* and following Jesus, though hard at first to corrupt hu-

† *Easy*—the original word χρηστος signifies αγαθος good and something more, *good in the highest degree*, and is rendered 1 Pet. ii. 3. *gracious*; the Seventy render it, Psal. xxxiv. 8. O taste and see οτι χρηστος ο κυριος, that the Lord is *gracious*. And so το χρηστος θεϋ, Rom. ii. 4. the *bounty of God*, that which is immediately before ο πλουτος χρηστοτητος, the *riches of his bounty*. And proportionably here Christ's *yoke*, the precepts which he lays on his disciples, (being of all other the things most agreeable to our human rational nature, and which by them who did not think men bound to do them have yet been counted most excellent in them that did practise them, and which, if the one custom of sin did not make us incompetent judges of it, would appear to us the fittest for our turns, the most pleasurable, profitable and honourable of all things) are here said by him not only to be a good, but a *gracious, benign, bounteous yoke*, that any man is the better for taking on him; and if he considered it well, he would put it on of his own accord, prefer it before liberty or any other service. Hammond on the place.

‡ See St. John viii. 31, 32. *If ye* continue *in my word* (said Christ) *then are ye my disciples* indeed: *and ye shall know the truth, and the* truth *shall make you* free.

man nature, will through the grace of God, become the greatest joy and consolation to the soul. We shall then find that the service of this dear and loving master is perfect freedom, that his *commandments are not grievous*, since every *one that is born of God overcometh the world*, and this is the victory, even our faith; we shall find all his heavenly precepts plain, and easy to be understood, good and pleasant to be practised, especially through his grace preventing and assisting us, especially through his favour, and merit recommending and completing our weak and imperfect services. Yea, we shall find his testimonies the very joy and delight‡ of our souls, as being all fulfilled in *love*, whose very nature is sweetness and peace, and which is "so great a good, that it maketh every burden light, and beareth with equanimity all the vicissitudes of life.‖ We shall soon find that the

‡ See Psalm cxix. 92. cxi. and xix. 8, 10, &c. &c.

‖ See Thomas à Kempis, and particularly ch. 12. b. ii. Our poet Waller, in his poem on Divine Love, canto 3. has these sweet lines; happy had it been for him if, as he beautifully wishes,

('O that my youth, had thus employ'd my pen,')

no other theme had ever given his soul delight.

Love as he lov'd!—how can we soar so high?
He can add wings, when he commands to fly;
Nor should we be with this command dismay'd,
He that examples gives will give us aid:
For he took flesh, that where his precepts fail,
His practice, as a pattern, may prevail:
His love at once and dread, instruct our thought,
As man he suffered, and as God he taught.
Will for the deed he takes: we may with ease
Obedient be, for if we love, we please.
Weak though we are, to love is no hard task,
And love for love is all that heav'n doth ask.
Love! that would all men just and temp'rate make,
Kind to themselves and others for his sake.
'Tis with our minds, as with a fertile ground;
Wanting this love, they must with weeds abound:

natural tendency of *Christ*'s doctrine and discipline is no less to inform the judgment concerning the most important points, and to settle the will in the right choice of them, than to direct the passions and affections aright, and to destroy and mortify in us, all those evil and corrupt desires which naturally tend to make men miserable here, and more so hereafter:—for one great end of the Son of God's taking our nature upon him, was that we should be delivered from the present evil nature of sin, and the tyranny of Satan built thereupon; that we should put off the old man and put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: that a new nature by the Spirit should be derived into us from Christ our head, a new nature abounding with all the new fruits of the spirit; and that our old nature should be destroyed and crucified, with all its old affections and lusts—And when by faith coming to Christ, we thus take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, we shall then find in that yoke *rest* to our souls indeed; rest from all our former burdens; rest from the thunderings of the law, from the power and condemnation of sin, from the dread and fear of death; rest from the stings of conscience; rest from the dread of future and almighty wrath. And we shall find rest, in the sense of Christ's infinite love to us; rest in the sense of our free forgiveness and gracious acceptance with the Father; rest in the happy sense of

(Unruly passions) whose effects are worse,
Than thorns and thistles springing from the curse.

And again, canto v.

Love as he lov'd !—a love so unconfin'd,
With arms extended would embrace mankind :
Self-love would cease, or be dilated when
We should behold as many selves as men :
All of one family, in blood ally'd
His precious blood, that for our ransom dy'd !

our adoption, in the comfort and consolation of the Spirit, in the joyful testimony of our own conscience; rest in the pleasing sense that we are doing that work, and discharging that duty for which we were born; rest in the glad remembrance that though imperfectly, yet if discharged sincerely and with a true heart, our frail and feeble offices will be accepted of the Father as perfect and entire for the sake and merits of his beloved Son; rest shall we find in the blessed hope of everlasting life; and when death shall be swallowed up in victory, rest, eternal *rest* to our souls shall we find and enjoy with God in heaven!

And is not the *yoke* of Christ *easy*,—is not then his *burden light*,—is not his *service perfect freedom*, —is not his rest, oh, Christian! earnestly to be desired by thy thirsty, thy *labouring* and heavy-laden soul—his rest, *whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace?* Can the hungry and thirsty soul want persuasions to come, eat and drink when plenteous supplies are freely presented to him? Can the weary traveller refuse refreshing rest kindly offered? Can the shipwreck'd mariner want invitations to come on shore, from raging tempests and the merciless waves? Much less surely can we need persuasion to come and receive this gift from Christ, so beset on all sides with the guilt and power of sin, with the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, with corrupt affections and prevailing lusts —so surrounded with sorrows and disquietude, so unable to procure peace and rest to our souls, in such imminent danger of present ruin, of future and eternal woe? O come unto the merciful, compassionate and long-suffering Jesus, *Come all* ye that *labour* and are *heavy-laden; Come unto me*, are his own affectionate and inviting words: and *the spirit and the bride say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take of this water of*

life freely. Could you, my brethren, refuse this word of love, supposing your Lord himself was standing amongst you, and making this gracious and kind offer to you all? doubtless you would make uncommon haste to fly to him, doubtless you would lay all your burdens at his feet, gladly take up his cross, deny yourselves, and follow the Lamb wheresoever he should lead! *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* In *Christ's stead,* in his place, as his messenger, minister and embassador, I *pray* you, I earnestly entreat, advise and exhort you, to *come* to him, and take his *heavenly yoke upon you*—I beseech you, dearly beloved, in the name of our bleeding master, and for the sake of your own souls, be ye reconciled to God, *come* to Christ, your only mediator and redeemer, and learn of him, so shall ye find *rest to your souls.*

But alas, what can his ministers do, when insensible of sin, and blind to their own unworthiness, men have no desire to attain this rest, for they feel not the want of it? None but the *labouring* and *heavy-laden can* come to Christ: How then can they come who, full of their own fancied righteousness, think themselves strong enough to bear their own burdens, acknowledging neither the weight nor guilt of sin, nor the want of an almighty sufferer? How can they come, who place all their religion in form, and depend wholly upon outward services and nominal profession, not on the merits of Christ for salvation—or who, worse than these,—vile and senseless hypocrites,—make the blessed gospel of Christ, a mere stalking-horse for worldly and unrighteous purposes? How can they come, who continue in a course of impiety, without remorse, without restraint, regardless of the law, and *insensible* of the wrath of God, who have *their consciences,*

seared, as it were, with an *hot iron, past feeling, working all uncleanness with greediness?* How can they come, who are so buried and inebriated in the delights of sense, the pleasures, profits and vanities of this poor transitory world, that they never knew a serious thought of the divine grace of God, and the gift of eternal life, that they have never cast one longing look, or raised one pious eye to heaven; that they never yet in godly fear have inquired, *what they shall do to be saved?* How can they come, who, when afflictions befal them, and God lays his heavy and correcting hand upon them, perversely struggle beneath the burden, impatient and discontent, and give themselves up to sour melancholy and black despair, rather than come with all their cares to Christ? How can any of these receive our Lord's invitation? And think, my brethren, how large a part of the world is comprised in these: But may God grant better things to each one of you: may he by his Spirit open your eyes to a due knowledge of yourselves and the exceeding sinfulness of sin: and surely, if ye would duly and impartially examine your own hearts and bring to the clear light of the gospel the many evil *thoughts*, *words*, and *actions* which crowd in condemnation against you, the many shameful commissions of evil, the many no less shameful omissions of good—and consider, if ye will not thus judge yourselves here, every thought, word, and action must and will be weighed in the exactest balance by a just and sin-avenging judge hereafter,*—would you then but seriously

* The inimitable author of *Night Thoughts*, thus finely expatiates on the folly of neglecting that awful consideration.

Shall man alone, whose fate, whose *final* fate,
Hangs on that hour, exclude it from his thought?
I think of nothing else—I see, I feel it;
All nature like an earthquake trembling round:
All deities, like summer's swarms, on wing!

examine and judge yourselves, "*that you be not judged of the Lord*, you could not fail being heavy-laden indeed under the sense of so many sins, you could not help feeling and confessing *that the remembrance of them is grievous, the burden of them intolerable;* you could not fail earnestly to repent, and heartily to be sorry for these your misdoings," for the very least of which you can make no amends to God; which have all been committed under such aggravating circumstances, against so much light, and so much grace; committed even by *Christians*, by persons *baptized* and dedicated to the ever blessed and holy Trinity; by those, who have promised, —*promised* even to the *faithful* God,—to renounce all sin, the world and the devil, committed against a God, who is all love to assist in every good course, whose Spirit is continually striving and struggling in the evil and rebellious hearts of men; against a God, who, to redeem us from sin, and its certain wages, so great is his love to us, hath given his only-begotten, his best-beloved Son, to die for us, and to become our propitiation and surety!—And must not the sense of offending such a God and Father, treading under foot and despising the most precious blood of such a Lord and Saviour, of grieving, and quenching the holy admonitions of such a guide and comforter—must not this stir you up to reflection, and cause you in fear and anguish of soul, to fly to him, who with open arms stands

> All basking in the full meridian blaze!
> I see the JUDGE enthron'd! the flaming guard!
> The volume open'd; open'd every heart!
> A sun-beam pointing out each secret thought!
> No patron, intercessor none! now past
> The sweet, the clement mediatorial hour!
> For guilt no plea; to pain no pause, no bound!
> Inexorable, all! and all extreme!
>
> *Consolation*, p. 148.

ready to receive, yea, and prepared to *run and meet* every returning, humbled and suppliant prodigal!

But if these considerations, joined to the knowledge, which you all have of the present misery and disquietude, and the future sore condemnation for a life of sin; if these are not sufficient to awaken you,—if these joined to the infinite love of *Jesus*, are not sufficient to bring you unto him; yet let us pray, that by his grace, through some means or other, he may, ere it be too late, cause you to feel and labour under your burden: and when it doth please him to lay any affliction upon you, whether in mind, body or estate, whether in yourselves or your friends,—when he opens your eyes to see the emptiness of all worldly blessings, the vanity of every thing beneath the sun; when he causes you to *labour and be heavy-laden;* then take special heed that you frustrate not the good favour and grace of God towards you; that you despise not, nor abuse his loving and fatherly chastisements: but carefully descend into yourselves, examine your own hearts, look to your past lives—and when the true cause of all troubles shall appear, when your sins shall manifest themselves, and your conscience shall join in the testimony; then remember these blessed words of the Lord Jesus, *Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy-laden*, and *I will give you rest*, and as it is the very nature of afflictions to humble the mind, the cross of Christ will be found so much the more easy to you, so much the more easily will you learn of your suffering Lord, to be meek and lowly in heart: Come therefore to him with all your burdens, cast all your care and put all your confidence in him; sit humbly with Mary at his feet, and carefully listen to his divine voice and doctrine; *Come* to him, there where he hath *promised ever to be present*, in his word and sacraments, as rightly and duly administered by his church: attend him dili-

gently in all the means of grace; seek him with fervour, with sincerity, with persevering importunity; with believing reliance on his sacred promise to bless and sanctify the means to every thirsty soul; be resigned wholly to his will, glad to bear his cross, and to be conformed to his divine example; renounce all self-esteem, self seeking and self-will, and let it be your meat and drink to do your heavenly Father's will: your chief and constant care, to keep a good conscience, void of offence towards God and towards man; that so you may be perfected in love, and so possess that heavenly rest and peace which surpasseth all understanding; which Christ here promiseth to *all* who will *come* to him for it, and which you may all of consequence obtain; for you *all* have it in your power, so that if you receive it not, it will be wholly your own faults,—and which when once obtained, you will find to be indeed the *pearl of great price*, and think the sale of *all you have* but small to give in purchase of it.

That therefore we may one, and all of us, so come to Christ, so take his yoke upon us and learn of him, as to procure this blessed and everlasting rest, God of his infinite mercy grant through the merits of the same Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE II.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

PART I.

MATTHEW viii. 1—4.

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And behold there came a LEPER *and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

WE are told by this Evangelist chap. iv. ver. 23. that *Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.* Having given therefore in the foregoing chapters a notable specimen of his *preaching*, which serves to prove abundantly that *never man spake like this man:* he now proceeds to

give some instances of the power of his *divine word*, in confirmation of the doctrine,‖ which he taught, and as undeniable evidences, that *he was indeed a teacher come from God*, seeing *no man could do the works which he did, except God were with him.* The Miracles which he wrought conduce not only to this end, but to shew us the proper application and practice, if I may so say, of our Saviour's doctrine: which will then be experienced with power in all our souls, when we come to Christ, after the example of these sufferers in the gospel, as the almighty redeemer, able and willing to save and to restore. That his readiness so to do, might not ever be doubted by any *labouring* and *heavy-laden* soul, he never rejected the suit, or cast out the petition of any who applied to him; fulfilling to our unspeakable comfort, the words of the prophet, *himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.* And that his power to save might be incontestably demonstrated to our faith, that *power*, we find, was exerted over objects, that could be no partners and confederates in fraud or collusion,—over raging *winds* and uncontrolable *waves;* over *devils*, that no *man could tame, no chains could bind;* over diseases and sickness instantaneously removed by his word; the cure of which, supposing them curable by natural means, must have been by very slow degrees; but most, or all of which were far beyond the reach of human skill, and incurable by all the powers of human art: for *since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one, that was born blind.* This was eminently the case with the *leprosy*, the afflicting disease of the first petitioner, who came to Christ for relief, after his descent from the

‖ *Recté* (says St. Jerom) *post prædicationem atque doctrinam, signi offertur occasio, ut per virtutem miraculi, præteritus apud audientes sermo firmetur.*

mountain. For so far was the cure of it above the *arm of flesh*, that it was esteemed the highest and most impious presumption, even to attempt it. As peculiarly inflicted, and immediately to be cured by God, through means, naturally speaking, the most improbable, weak and unavailing, it was called emphatically *the finger of God:* and none but the priest, appointed and directed in his course, had power to inspect and determine concerning it. Separation from society was the unhappy lot of those under this loathsome disease, which was generally esteemed a punishment immediately inflicted for sin: and as on this account, there could be no doubt of the reality of it in the person applying, (since this separation was the consequence of the priest's inspection and order) so neither could there be any possibility of deceit in the cure, which the Jews well knew, no human power could effect; which the loathsome nature of the disease would sufficiently manifest, and of which the priests upon the man's shewing himself to them, must have been abundantly convinced.

These considerations suggest to us something very remarkable in this address of the *Leper* to *Christ*, who having heard, as it is probable, his divine sermon on the mount, and thence conceived strong faith and hope in this blessed person, *who taught as one having authority and not as the scribes* —and being under great affliction by means of this horrible malady, fully convinced of Christ's power, but from his own unworthiness greatly doubting of his *will* to cleanse him,—he came, fell down at his feet, and worshipped him, saying, *Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* He knew that no human power could make him clean: he knew that this was the work of *God alone.* His calamity moved our merciful High-priest to compassion: his faith and prayer obtained the blessing: *For Jesus put*

forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And his divine word was attended with power: all nature is at his beck: he saith, *unto this servant of his, go and he goeth; to another come, and he cometh. As soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from the man, and he was cleansed:* the filthiness and defilement of his disorder was removed, *he saw that he was cleansed,* and probably, as in the case of *Naaman, his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.** This done, Jesus straitly charged him, that he should tell no man; but proceed in the due and regular way by shewing himself immediately to *the priest, and offering the gift commanded by Moses for a testimony,* and undeniable evidence to them, that the *cure* as being perfectly wrought, must have been wrought by one superior to the *law,* that of consequence, Jesus, whose divine word effected the cure, was the promised Messiah, the expected redeemer of Israel; and that it was their wisdom and duty, if they would not blind their eyes and harden their hearts to receive and confess him, as such.†

* 2 Kings, v. 14. It is somewhat remarkable that Elihu in Job xxviii. 24, 25, after speaking of man in his unregenerate state, adds, upon leading him to the atonement and means of regeneration—His *flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth:* manifestly, as it should seem, inculcating that doctrine, (a defect in, and ignorance of which some learned men suppose to have been the grand fault of Job, for which he was so severely tried, and upon a sight of which he cries out, *wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes,* xlii. 6.) namely, the doctrine of the natural sinfulness and depravity of his nature, the means of its cure, and the need of a better righteousness than his own to render him acceptable in the sight of a just, a pure, and a holy God. The whole passage deserves an accurate survey, and perhaps the *Leper*'s case and cure may be found not wholly inapplicable.

† St. Ambrose observes, that our Saviour's cleansing of the *Leper* follows close after the benedictions, and the rest of his sermon on the mount, in which he had declared, that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; giving the *leper* thereby to

As winds and storms and unclean spirits were obedient to his word, so here we see the most inveterate disease no less obedient: giving an undeniable attestation to the supreme power and authority of Christ. Men may command actions to be done, but to perform them by a command only is the sure prerogative of Divinity. And as is his power, so is his mercy; ready to be exerted in behalf of our *leprous* souls, when in humble faith, and fervent prayer, we seek to the all prevailing merits of our Lord for succour: when like this *Leper* we fall down at his feet, confessing, that we believe him *able*, and we hope him *willing* to make us *clean*. For we have all need of his *cleansing*. And as our souls are all spotted over with the filthy contagion and leprosy of sin, as we are all by nature born in sin, *unclean, in our blood,*† unless we apply to Christ for a cure, we must for ever be separated from him and that glorious city, *into which there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth.*

For the fuller manifestation of this important truth, and our better understanding the greatness of the present miracle, I will,

I. Give you, from the scripture, a general account of the nature, cure, and spiritual designation of leprosy; and,

II. I will dwell upon the several points of doctrine, use, and improvement which arise from the present miraculous cure of this disease, by the commanding word of Jesus.

understand, that, being cleansed by the power of Christ, it was not in virtue of the law, but by one much superior that his leprosy was done away.

† Who can bring a *clean* thing out of an *unclean?* Not one. How can he be *clean* that is born of a woman? Job xiv. 4. xxv. 4. When I passed by thee, saith God, and saw thee *polluted* in thine own *blood,* I said unto thee, in thy *blood,* live. Ezekiel xvi. 6.

One thing I could wish you always to retain in mind: that in whatever bodily diseases and sicknesses Christ healed, something more was intended than the *mere corporal healing*. He is the blessed *sun of righteousness*, that arose with *healing in his wings*, not only to dispense health to the diseases of the body, but to the far more dangerous diseases of the soul. He came not only to raise bodies from the dead, but souls from the death of sin: he came a light into the world, not only to restore sight to the blind, but spiritual sight to the blind in heart and understanding: he came not only to cure the leprous in body, but the leprous in soul also, those who are spotted over with the contagion of sin and deeply infected with the poison of original corruption: which, says one,‖ "that it might be shadowed out by a visible sign, Christ conferred health and soundness of body, as an image or pledge of a certain greater health and soundness, on those who believed him able to perform it, and to make them clean." And, I trust, our reflections on the present disease will be found confirmative hereof: will demonstrate to us at once the power and goodness of God, our Saviour; the misery and depravity of our fallen nature, and the absolute necessity of the blood of a Redeemer, and the blessed unction of the holy Spirit to cleanse and sanctify us. For without *blood* and *oil*, no Leper ever could, no sinner (O that *the despisers would regard and wonder*) no sinner ever *can be cleansed!*

I. First then I am to speak of the nature, cure, and spiritual designation of Leprosy: which was a disease of all others the most defiling and hateful; by human means incurable; shockingly contagious, so as to pollute even whole houses and garments, and for that reason, by the law, excluding the per-

‖ *Grotius* on the place.

son infected from the society of others. It was a very voracious disease, working its way wide within, before it shewed itself in any outward part: which it did by horrible boils and loathsome sores overspreading the whole body, arising, as was supposed, from a general taint and corruption of the whole human mass: there were different degrees and stages of the disorder; some having only rising spots, some being wholly covered over with it; to have it in the head was the last and most dangerous stage of all. It rendered the object filthy and odious to sight and smell: nay, and detestable too for the most part, as the disease was generally esteemed a punishment* inflicted by God for enormous crimes. It was thought, and therefore dreaded, as the greatest and worst of all legal pollutions, and was in reality the most painful, melancholy, and foul disorder, depriving the afflicted sufferer of all comforts both of body and soul, of all corporal ease, of all spiritual and civil correspondence. And as it was absolutely incurable, save by the hand and finger of God, working by the means of the legal ceremonies, (a great variety of which were necessary to perfect the cure, and all of which the priest was to apply) therefore the priests alone were ordained and appointed of God to inspect and judge of those under suspicion of this devouring malady: in order to which the exactest rules possible are prescribed by the Almighty himself in Leviticus :‡ And when they determined it to be a real leprosy, all outward demonstrations of shame and sorrow were to be made. *The Leper* (saith the

* See the case of Miriam, Gehazi, Uzziah, &c. Christ, says one, to shew that he came to take away the wrath of God by taking away sin, began with the cure of a Leper.

‡ See ch. xiii; and for a comment upon it consult *Ainsworth, Bibliotheca biblica, Critici sacri,* &c.

Lord) *in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare: and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean;* and all the days, *wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled: he is unclean, he shall dwell alone, without the camp shall his habitation be.* Levit. xiii. 45, 46.

Such was the disease of *Leprosy:* and what could in a more full and lively manner represent that original taint and corruption, which hath worked its way wide, and spread itself all through the soul of man,—that hellish poison of the old serpent, which, with its deadly bane, hath corrupted the whole nature and constitution of man, shewing its inward and fatal efficacy by its outward and loathsome fruits? *For those things* (saith our Saviour, in testimony to this inward fountain of uncleanness) *which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the* HEART, *and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man.* These are the outward and sure manifestations of the inward taint, the *leprosy* of the soul: These are as undeniable and unerring proofs of original sin, as the *outward* plague in the flesh was of the *inward* plague of leprosy: and these, alas—to all mankind, more or less, are very convincing evidences of that sin, wherein *we* are conceived, who may *say to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and sister.*† I say *more or less,* because though all are by nature born in sin,‖ though every

† Job xvii. 14. I cannot but recommend here Father Calmet's ingenious observations on this subject, which the reader will find in p. 163 of the IIId volume of *Bibliotheca biblica,* as well as in that writer's own commentary.

‖ See the 9th article of our church, entitled, *Of original, or birth Sin.*

individual is an heir of that same original death and evil introduced into the world by our first parent's transgression, the seeds of every vice being sown in all our hearts;—yet every one doth not advance equal steps in iniquity; those seeds have not in all the same means of sprouting up to full maturity, every one is not equally *leprous*: some indeed are wholly spotted over and perfectly covered with the contagion, *working all uncleanness with greediness:* some have only rising spots and burning boils, evil lusts and strong passions, which, or ever they burst into act, they labour to subdue, mortify and keep under; applying to God in due season, and finding *his grace sufficient for them:* others again have it in *head* and heart, are utterly gone astray from the commandments of God, *heady, high-minded, self-willed,* hoping to be cured by their own means, or vainly thinking themselves well in the midst of sickness, safe and secure in the midst of danger, *crying out, peace, peace,* when there is *no peace.* Very dreadful indeed is this same leprosy in the head: doubly unclean is the man in this woful case: the farthest of all others from conversion, because least capable of conviction: self-justified, *having eyes and seeing not, ears and yet hearing not:* and at the greatest remove from that simplicity of intention, that humble childlike disposition, which places the willing soul in lowly attention at the feet of Jesus: the prophet pronounces his *wo* upon such: *Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight:* the wise man tells us, *there is more hopes of a fool, than of these men:* wherefore he warns us against this false, this self-wisdom, and shews us what is the true: 1st, *be not wise in thine own eyes:* 2d, *fear the Lord, and depart from evil.* And to convince us fully of the danger of a fond leaning to our own vain imagination, the great

apostle St. Paul commands—*be not wise in your own conceits.**

This disease was very filthy and loathsome to the sight: it changed the appearance of those who were infected with it: making them who were before never so lovely to behold, odious and frightful to the view: so sin renders man, who was created in perfect beauty, the very image and similitude of his Creator, hateful and odious in his sight, an abomination to him: it makes him a perfect stranger to God, changes his form and visage, and separates between him and his Creator: corrupt in understanding, will and affection, he is loathsome as a dead carcase, abhorred as *a vessel wherein there is no pleasure.*‖ And this pure God gave a signal proof of his hatred and abhorrence of sin, as well as of its filthy and defiling nature, when he sent his Son to die upon the cross as the only means to atone for the sins of a guilty world; to shed his divine blood, as the only means to cleanse the infinite filth of a world of leprous sinners! Should not this cause us to look upon sin in ourselves and others with abhorrence and holy indignation?—Should it not advise us to take especial heed, that we apply this blood of God to the *cleansing* ourselves *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?*

The Leprosy was the worst of all diseases: and of all evils *sin* is and ought to be esteemed by us the very worst; more formidable than all earthly ills, than sickness or sorrow, than even death or hell: for so it is both in itself and in its consequences, robbing the most high God of his due honour and glory; and robbing the soul of all present health and peace, of that only true happiness for which it

* See Isai. v. 21. Proverbs xxvi. 12; iii. 7. Rom. xii. 16.
‖ Jerem. xxii. 28.

was created, the love and enjoyment of God: bringing on a detestable crowd of evils; and if persisted in, finally and for ever excluding from the paradise of bliss: finally and for ever shutting up the self-condemned soul in the flaming pit, with devils and damned spirits, to howl and gnash the teeth, bewail and curse its own wretched and inexcusable folly, through endless ages, without hope of pardon, without the least expectation of release.

This disease also was very noisome; and no wonder, when all the humours were vitiated in those infected with it. The same is the case with their minds, who are polluted and defiled by sin: *whose throats are as open sepulchres.* For as an intolerable stench exhales from sepulchres, where putrid carcases lie: so from that body, wherein the soul is dead, because of sin, nothing but the most noisome stench *ariseth* to offend the great Majesty of heaven. And if, from the acceptable offerings of good men, the Lord is said to *smell a sweet savour*,‡ what a foul stench must daily ascend from the numberless and filthy iniquities of a world of transgressors? While this man from the sepulchre of a defiled mouth sends forth nothing but blasphemies, oaths, lies, lasciviousness: while from that proceeds nothing but *evil thoughts*, murders, adulteries, &c. even all that hellish crew of barking dogs; conceived and nourished in the fertile womb of sin, from the hellish offspring and poison of their father the devil!‖

‡ This is said of Noah's offering, Gen. viii. 21.

‖ Milton's beautiful allegory of satan, sin and death, book II. line 648, &c. is here referred to. He makes sin the daughter of satan, and death the offspring of both: the incestuous mixture between *sin and death* produces those monsters and hell-hounds, which enter into her womb and tear her bowels, while her son (*death*) sits opposite—*and sets them on.*

The very breath of those infected with this disease was contagious: it was remarkably defiling; on which account, the Lepers were excluded from all civil as well as religious communion, and compelled to dwell alone without the camp. And what is there so contagious, so defiling as sin? How doth the prevalence of ill example, like a pestilence, spread its malevolent and baneful effects around? Who can touch pitch and not be defiled with it? Mens natural corruptions cause them to slide into an imitation of the evil practices of others, and to catch their vices, as easily as dry wood the flame put to it, as tinder the spark from the flint. Wherefore St. Paul compares sin to leaven, *because a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* Both in communities and in our own souls, one ill example and one vice predominant may continually spread the disease, and bring on the last and most desperate stage of spiritual leprosy. Let a man loose with the small-pox full upon him, and none will doubt but that the infection will spread through the neighbourhood. Infinitely more contagious is the leprous sinner. Would God, we were all as careful to guard against the evil of such contagion, as we are against that of bodily diseases.

Every thing the Leper touched was defiled by him; nay, the plague not only infected men, but houses, vessels, and garments: from whence we

> And me his parent (*saith she*) would full soon devour,
> For want of other prey, but that he knows
> His end with mine involv'd!

What can more emphatically paint to our view the origin and sad fruits of sin—or be a nobler and more instructive poetical improvement of St. James's words, i. 15. *Then when* LUST *hath conceived, it bringeth forth* SIN, *and sin when it is finished bringeth forth* DEATH! I cannot wish my reader a finer entertainment than a perusal of the whole passage as it stands in the incomparable *Paradise Lost*, which any extract would greatly injure.

have a fuller demonstration of the defiling nature of sin, and the evil state of the sinner, who brings a curse upon himself, his house and possessions—*For I will bring forth the curse, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof.* O ye sinners, that ye would be wise and consider: *O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!* will ye not see your folly, will ye not believe the words of the God of truth?—Will ye not be convinced that the very means ye are taking to secure worldly things are the sure means of your own and your posterity's loss and destruction? In particular, O ye false swearers, let me address you, for whose *sake the land mourneth,* and for the increase of whom amongst us, our *Jerusalem,* it is to be feared, will at length *sit solitary and become as a widow:* To what end is the number of your oaths? See ye not the curse of God that is gone out against you, and hangs by a thread over your devoted heads?—what will ye do in the end thereof?—it shall consume your houses—it shall bring you and yours to utter ruin; no profit shall ye reap from your iniquitous swearing, except eternal horror be deemed a profit by you. Repent, repent, I beseech you, and turn to the Lord, that so your sins may be blotted out; seek him while he may be found: call ye upon *him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.* But unless ye do so return never vainly expect a pardon: *ye are already condemned! Tophet is ordained of old, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it:** and it must burn

* See John iii. 18. and Isaiah xxx. 33.

against you with irresistible fury for ever. For as the Leper was excluded from the camp and Israel of God, shut out and compelled to dwell in misery and distress alone, so must the sinner, remaining in his sin, unregenerate, unrepenting, for ever be excluded from the true camp and Israel of God: and as shut out here from the communion of saints, from the kingdom of grace and salvation, from the church militant on earth, so for ever be shut out from the church triumphant in heaven, *the new Jerusalem, the general assembly, the church of the first-born,* from God, from Jesus, and from glory. And as an earnest hereof, both to admonish him of his state, and to advise him of the consequences—would God, leprous sinners were so rare as to enable us continually to practise it!—We are commanded to use this wholesome severity; namely, to *mark bad men and those that cause divisions and offences: and to avoid them: to withdraw ourselves from every disorderly walker: not to keep company, if any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat.** And the public censures of the church were doubtless appointed also to this end.

But this was not all: the leprosy if uncured, reduced the body to a miserable, mutilated dead carcase: eat out the ears, the eyes, the tongue; consumed the nose, the feet, and destroyed every faculty. Hence Aaron interceding with God, for his sister Miriam, says, *Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed, when he cometh out of his mother's womb.* And thus sin, if become habitual, corrodes and eats away every faculty of the soul, destroying all spiritual sense and understand-

* Rom. xvi. 17. 2 Thess. iii. 6. 1 Cor. v. *See* Theodoret's *Questions upon Leviticus.*

ing. It consumes the ears, so that they can neither hear nor obey the commands, or regard the threats of God: it blinds the eyes, so that they cannot see the greatness of their misery, the danger of approaching death, the horrors of future judgment. It deprives the tongue of any power to pray or to praise, to entreat the mercy or shew forth the merits of a bleeding God. In fine, such leprous sinners have neither hands to perform, nor feet to run in the way of God's commandments: and "this (agreeable to ancient wisdom) is the greatest of all evils, if a man be neither wise himself, nor willing to attend to the wisdom of the wise;" the unhappy case of those infected with this spiritual leprosy.—Of which whosoever desires to be healed, he must apply to the true High-priest of our profession, with all demonstrations of shame and sorrow, *rending his clothes, and making bare* his head, *rending his heart*, in token of grief and contrition, *covering his lip*‡ to express his shame; and to keep silence before God, as being under the greatest confusion of face, and unworthy to open his lips before him, except in words of confession and humiliation: crying out, *unclean, unclean,* woe is me, *wretched man that I am,* I have *sinned, I have done amiss, who will deliver me from the body of this death, God be merciful to me a sinner!*

Whoever thus apply to Christ in true repentance, with firm faith, and earnest prayer, they will find him *faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness:* which whatever means of cleansing, whatever methods of

‡ Hesychius upon this place well observes, "the stench of sin is rank and foul from human nature in general, particularly so from the tongue, and most of all so where it happens to be within the lips of a spiritual monitor. For how should he open his mouth against a doctrine or practice, which at the same time his example encourages and propagates?

salvation men may propose to themselves, is the only way whereby we can be saved, for there is salvation in no other, and *it is the blood of Jesus Christ only, which cleanseth us from all sin.**

This was very emphatically figured out in the ceremonies used for the cleansing of the Leper, who on the day of his cleansing was to be brought to the priest, and the priest was to go forth out of the camp, (even as our merciful High-priest came from heaven, and his Father's bosom for us miserable sinners) to meet and inspect him, and to perform the appointed ceremonies: upon which I shall be very brief, giving you a general key, whereby you may the better understand them when you refer to, and carefully read God's directions concerning them, in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus: as I would hasten to the miracle before us, wherein we have a sight, without the veil of the law, of the great healer of the nations, the almighty restorer of lost and lapsed human nature. These ceremonies indeed do point out to us in as full and expressive a manner as any perhaps in the whole law —the meritorious and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, both God and man dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, in the lively figure of *two birds*, which yet like the two goats† on the great day of atonement made but one sacri-

* Rom. vii. 24. Luke xviii. 13. 1 John, i. 7—9.

† Consult the xvith chapter of Leviticus, St. Cyrill of Alexandria in his spiritual interpretation of the leprosy speaks thus, "Sin is the leprosy of the mind. 'Tis its destruction, and when it has got possession of it by the poison of dead works, it deadens all its faculties, and makes it like a distempered body, a burden to itself.—As for the *two* clean birds they are a type of the two natures in one Christ, as one sacrifice. And Hesychius observes upon the *letting loose the living bird*,—"Christ's divine nature was impassible, though inseparable from his human, which suffered; on which account it was that the human nature being baptized in blood, the impassible and that together might be let loose into the open field, that is, ascend up into heaven.

fice, as *God* and *man* make but one Christ: one of these birds (figurative of the human nature, which was capable of sufferings and death,) was to be slain in an earthen vessel over running water, that the mingled stream of blood and water might represent that mystic stream which flowed from the broken vessel‡ of Christ's body; while the other bird still alive, figurative of the divine nature which was impassible and could not be held in the grave was to be dipt in the blood of the slain one, with Cedar, Hyssop, and Scarlet, and let loose into the open field; to shew the union of the divine and human nature, and the influence of that union, in all the concernments of our peace, and the excellency and efficacy of that blood, which atoned for us, and which is stiled in scripture—wonderful to think—even the *blood of God*—who from that same blessed union, is said to have laid down his life for us! *Hereby we perceive the love of* GOD, *because he laid down* HIS LIFE *for us** O how should we prize this most precious blood!—how should we adore the infinite love that poureth it forth in rich streams from his heart, for our sakes?—and how should we pity and pray for those who are so miserable and deceived as to despise this fountain flowing plenteously to comfort the thirsty soul as to count this *blood of the covenant an unholy thing!* Blessed Jesus, howlong! *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!*

The necessity of an effectual application of this cleansing blood to the heart, is no less clearly taught us by the *sprinkling* of the Leper, and that *seven* times with the blood of the slain bird: *For we are elect through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of*

‡ See 2 Cor. iv. 7. Rom. ix. 20. from whence it will manifestly appear, that an *earthen vessel* is a scripture similitude for a *body of flesh.*

* 1 John, iii. 16, compare Acts xx. 28.

the blood of Jesus Christ. How requisite constant mortification, cutting off all fleshly lusts, that *war against the soul, laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*, are to an effectual cleansing by this blood sprinkled upon our hearts, we are shewn by the Leper's shaving all his hair off his head, his beard, and his eye-brows, and washing his clothes and flesh in water. The life of thanksgiving and the thorough sanctification by the Spirit, which must follow, and demonstrate the reality of our freedom from the filth of sin, are beautifully pictured out to us by the trespass, sin, and meat-offering, to be offered before the Lord; and particularly by the application of the blood and oil of those offerings to the extreme parts of the body,† which is the same ceremony with that used in the consecration of the high-priest,‡ and the crowning one, as it were, of the whole; for the priest was to put them (the *blood* and *oil*, the blood first, and the oil upon it for a very obvious reason) *upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot*, pouring what remained of the oil upon his head, to denote an entire consecration and perfect sanctification of his whole body and mind, who is *cleansed* from the filth and misery of sin, by the purifying blood of Jesus; who is renewed and sanctified by the *unction* of that holy anointing

† These rites were to signify, how by the blood of Christ the ear should be sanctified to obey, the hand to work, the foot to walk, in the commandments of God, and so the whole man to be renewed, 2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. says our incomparable Ainsworth in his note on the place, whom consult, as well as the excellent Bochart either in *Hieroz.* p. 2. lib. I. ch. 22, &c. or as abridged in *Bibliotheca biblica*, vol. iii. p. 192. If the reader is inclined to see the whole subject largely handled, he may find it in Doctor Taylor's *Christ revealed,* or *the Old Testament explained,* chap. xiv. sect. 3. printed 1635.

‡ See by all means Exodus xxix. 20, &c.

Spirit, whose comfort to the soul, is like oil to the body, and who is the gift and purchase of Emmanuel's blood.

Such then was the leprosy, and such the ceremonies used for the cure of it; without which no Leper could possibly be cleansed, as without what these ceremonies signified no sinner ever can be saved. In all of them, it is obvious to remark, that there is nothing which, humanly speaking, could be in the least likely to remove the disorder: the sprinkling a Leper with blood, the putting blood and oil upon his ear, hand and foot, the slaying such and such particular creatures, *&c.* could by no means have been effectual in themselves for the recovery of soundness to a Leper's body: no, it was a divine act, the immediate work of God, the finger of the Almighty! And as this was universally known and believed among the Jews, the Leper who applied to our Saviour, could not but acknowledge and sincerely believe his divine power: as his address indeed sufficiently proves—which I come now,

II. To consider, with such doctrines and uses, as arise from this instance of our Lord's mercy and might.

I need not from what has gone before, advise you of the loathsome, filthy and defiling nature of sin—nor need I produce any examples to prove the truth of what has been advanced! I sincerely wish vice was so uncommon, as to require proofs of its flagrancy; but you see it, you hear it every day and every hour; you cannot shut your eyes to it, nor help being offended with the repeated and abounding instances of the breach of every one of God's holy commandments, of the neglect of the whole law of Christ: while blasphemy and dreadful abuse of the Most High, profane cursing and swearing, horrible profanation of the sabbath, filthy drunken-

ness and brutality, abominable lust, adultery, fornication, murders, revellings—pride, malice, envy, and, not least of all, impious despite to the covenant of grace, and the God that bought us, with every other vice reigns in full power, and holds despotic empire through the kingdom! As fully sensible hereof, would God we were as sensible of the fatal effects and dismal fruits of this evil; that so we might each one of us apply to him, who is *able* and *willing to make us clean.* No man can tell how far the force of his single example might prevail: if vice is contagious, goodness is diffusive, in this respect too we may say, *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;* and it is more especially the case of those in exalted stations, whose good practices bring virtue into reputation, and who, if they cannot wholly stem the opposing tide, will yet at a certain hour find unspeakable satisfaction in having made a resolute stand against it. Dare therefore to be singularly good: "when vice is in fashion, singularity becomes a virtue:" Look to your languishing country, ye *great ones* of the land: it is in you to revive its drooping head, it is in you to make religion flourish, it is in you to recommend that righteousness and truth which are the only bulwarks of a kingdom, and which as reaching even to the highest heavens, no convulsions of the earth can ever remove, no terrors of the Lord will ever shake: for *righteousness exalteth a nation, the throne is established by righteousness; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, saith the Lord of hosts.*

DISCOURSE III.

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

PART II.

MATTHEW viii. 1—4.

I COME now, in the second place, to consider the present miracle, and so to explain, enforce, and improve it, as shall be most to your spiritual instruction and advantage.

From this Leper we learn,

I. The proper manner of applying to Christ, without which we can expect no favour from him, for to *seeking* only, the blessing of *finding* is annexed. He came under the burden of a most grievous disease, which he knew and confessed a punishment for sin: he came in the deepest humility, under the sense of his own manifold unworthiness, *falling down at* Christ's *feet*, with lively faith in his divine power, and with fervent prayer, saying, *Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* Thus manifestly declaring his faith in Jesus, as the Son of God, as the expected Messiah, as endued with power from on high, and able to do, what was confessedly in the power of God only, to deliver a Leper from his leprosy. And if we desire our salvation, thus must we also approach him: conscious of our great and numberless offences, truly humbled beneath the guilt and misery of sin, firmly persuaded that he is

not only *able*, but *willing to save* to the *uttermost all that* come to the Father by *him*, and imploring with fervent prayer this Lord of mercy, this God of all power to make us clean. One great advantage we have over this Leper, in that we are blessed with as strong an assurance of our Saviour's *will*, as of his *ability* to save; we who have this example of his compassion before us; we who have heard him with a voice of love call all the labouring and heavy-laden to rest and repose; and we who know that he laid down his life for us, and thus gave us the greatest proof possible of his friendship:—We surely can never doubt of his good-will to save, we surely can never want any motives to persuade us to come to him, to fall down before him, and say, "Lord, thou art able and willing to make us clean, be it unto us according to thy word! Sinners though we are, thou camest into the world to save sinners; thou wast called by that most sweet and refreshing name JESUS, because born *to save thy people from their sins:* if we in sincerity *confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Low at thy footstool therefore do we fall, imploring thy mercy, and relying upon thy infinite grace; Jesus, master, have mercy on us, thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" Thus if we come to Christ, we shall for ourselves have full experience of that *readiness* and *ability* to save, which the present history, for the confirmation of our faith, and the comfort of every repenting sinner, so beautifully pictures out in our compassionate High-priest.

II. The Leper had no doubt of Christ's power: *thou canst;* all his fear was from himself—"*if thou wilt do this*, for such a miserable, worthless wretch as I."—Oh, happy would it be for us, if our faith was thus strongly established in the divine and almighty power of our Lord, while we humbly trem-

bled before him under a feeling sense of our manifold unworthiness; for we find that the Leper's loathsome and defiling state, his miserable and foul disease, did not render Christ averse to him: or turn away the bowels of his compassion from him: nay, we are told that those *bowels were moved** towards him; he was touched with the most inward pity; even with such pity as he was moved toward a world of leprous sinners, all lying in their blood, all lying in defiling guilt and iniquity, when he came to do his Father's will, to cleanse, redeem and save them from all their pollutions; even with such pity as he is moved towards thee, O penitent and heart-afflicted sinner, when with all thy diseases and all thy sorrows, thou appliest unto him, seeking for mercy, for mercy and forgiveness from that crucified Saviour, who desireth not the death of a sinner; and whose cross for the consolation of all who will *look up to it and be saved*, is surrounded by a denying Peter, an unbelieving Thomas, an adulterous Magdalen, a persecuting Paul!

Who then can doubt of his will to save all that in true repentance and sincere faith draw nigh unto him? And his *Power* a Christian should blush to question, when he contemplates this Leper, and sees the triumphs of his faith. If thou *wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean—said he—*I will*, said Christ, *be thou clean.* And *immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* You have heard from the law a description of this loathsome, inveterate, and obstinate disease, which was indeed the finger of God, for the cure of which so many ceremonies were ordained, and so long time was necessary. But the God, who

* St. Mark, i. 41. says expressly, Jesus *moved with compassion*, σπλαγχνεσθεις the known and usual word in the New Testament from σπλαγχνα (bowels) to *have the bowels moved.*

cleansed the Leper, by means of those ceremonies, could as easily do it without them—and you see him here, in an instant, perfecting the miraculous cure. This was an undeniable proof of his divinity; and the Pharisees, who once reasoned right, proving him the true God—*who can forgive sins but God alone?* might have reasoned in the same manner here—" who can cure a Leper but God alone,"—Jesus both forgave sins, and cured Lepers, and can any human being be blind to the conclusion ?* Hence when John Baptist sent messengers to inquire whether he were really the expected Messiah or not, the Son of the Most High, he returns for answer, amongst other marks of his divinity, *that the Lepers were cleansed,* as being the peculiar act of God, and never performed by the word of man, or by any power less than that of Jehovah: which the king of Israel affirms as a matter well known, when Naaman was sent to him by the king of Assyria to be cured of his leprosy; " *Am I a God,* (saith he) *to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy.*"

The very touch of Lepers was defiling; yet Christ in the performance of this cure did not disdain to touch the man; for we read, that *he put forth his hand and touched him,* saying, *I will, &c.* He could with no less ease have cleansed him by a word (as he did afterwards in another case)† than now by his touch, had he thought good so to do; but he chose rather this method to convince and confute any calumnies, which the Pharisees might raise concerning the true author of the cure; and to shew that he was the Lord, yea and fulfiller of the law, who could not be polluted with the touch of the

* See this more fully treated of, in the following sermon on the *Paralytic.*

† See Luke xvii. 14.

leprosy, as in the law, but who, on the contrary, by his touch took away the leprosy and all uncleanness. He conversed with Publicans and sinners, yet was harmless, holy and undefiled: *separate from sinners*, when in the midst of them, for the *prince of this world had nothing in him.*

But he intended principally hereby to shew us the dignity, use and advantage of the flesh, which he assumed; namely, that by it he restores our corrupted nature, and becomes our life-giving Saviour; not by his divinity only, but by the assistance and ministry of that flesh which he took, and which, from the hypostatic union with the divinity, is rendered *life-giving, quickening flesh.** *Two* birds were necessary to make *one* complete sacrifice; the two natures of God and man were necessary to make one Christ. For as the living bird could not cleanse the Leper, without the dead one, nor the dead one without the living: so neither could we be purged from our sins by the divinity without the humanity, nor by the humanity without the divinity.§ Therefore he, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, took our flesh, became *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*, to give us an access, and a kind of right to receive grace from that fulness. But it may be objected, that in his most pure and holy flesh the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily: while ours, miserably defiled by the filth of sin, is so polluted, such *a cage of unclean birds*, that it appears unworthy the majesty of Christ to hold any communion

* John vi. 33. *The Bread of God is he, which cometh down from heaven, and* giveth life *unto the world.* Read the whole chapter.

§ These are Bochart's words from his *Hierozoicon*, as quoted above, p. 44. *Nam ut neque avis viva sine mortua, neque mortua sine viva petuit leprosum a lepra purgare: ita nec Deo sine homine, nec ab homine sine Deo, debuit fieri peccatorum purgatio.*

with us, which reason (persuading us to judge like this Leper) would lead us to think he should abhor and utterly refuse. This objection the present example wholly removes; we see him here, to our great and endless comfort, stretching out his holy, clean, and divine hand, touching a body wholly infected with a most noisome and contagious leprosy: a touch which perfect soundness followed, *For immediately the leprosy was cleansed.** Such and so great are the benefits of the incarnation of Christ: who taking our nature cleansed it from sin, sanctified and enriched it with the fulness of the deity. And that this blessing and honour might not be thought to extend only to that mass of human flesh which he himself took, he again communicates to us his *own flesh*, which, having received from us, he hath now sanctified, that by this means our corrupt nature may be reformed and renewed. And unless we do eat of that *flesh* so sanctified, of that flesh *which is meat indeed*, how can we expect to have any *life in us?*† Let us therefore eat in faith and gratefully acknowledge the immense love of our Saviour Christ, to man, who hath not disdained to touch our leprous nature, with his own most pure and holy flesh, which so far from being defiled itself thereby, wholly cleanses and sanctifies ours. And when we approach his hallowed table to receive the divine food there presented to our souls, let us contemplate this Leper: and remember how powerful the touch of Christ is to cleanse us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; and when we receive that divine food, then let us in humble sort

* These are the thoughts and expressions of the divine St. Chrysostom and St. Cyrill, and which I have taken from them and Chemnitz.

† How—since Christ saith positively and peremptorily, *Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no* LIFE *in you?* John vi. 53.

entreat him to bless it to the appointed end, to make it effectual to the cleansing and sanctifying of our souls; let us entreat him to *touch and make us clean!*

III. As from this miracle we are taught the proper manner of applying to Christ, and the readiness and ability of our Lord, to save all that come to him labouring and heavy-laden—so are we no less fully directed in the due conduct of ourselves afterwards.

He orders the Leper to tell no man, that is, till he had shewed himself to the priest, for a testimony to them; a *testimony* that Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law; and that, upon the man's reporting what Christ had done for him, the priests who saw him cured, without the legal means, might have convincing evidence, that this divine healer was indeed the expected Messiah, of whom it was foretold, that *he should be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.* And when they had such a testimony it argues the greatest hardness of heart in them still obstinately to stand out, and refuse assent and worship to this *despised Galilean.* However they might sooth their consciences we have the fullest testimony from hence, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, able and willing to save: and a sure rule whereby to conduct ourselves. For though the cleansing of a Leper was the immediate act of God, and though our Saviour performed the work by a touch of his almighty hand, yet the ceremonies of the Law were by no means to be dispensed with, being rendered necessary and obligatory by the command of God himself. The case is the same at present. We must not think to act in religious matters according to our own caprice or fancy, nor do each one of us, what shall *seem good in our own eyes; but whatsoever thing the Lord hath commanded us, that we must observe to do, we must neither add nor diminish from it.* The *word of*

God and the doctrine of the church, as built thereupon, must be our infallible rule, not any private purposes, any delusive self-will, any vain and self-seeking. And this rule God would have kept so fixed and inviolate, that he approves not those who depart from it, and without the word either from the traditions of men, private ends, or false zeal, attempt any thing, though apparently and outwardly to the glory of God. They can no more be approved of him, than this Leper, who transgressed a plain command of Christ—*see thou tell no man*,*—though perhaps it might have been under a laudable pretence, to spread abroad and make manifest the mighty works of Christ.

I will not enter into the disputes concerning this man's disobedience: certainly however, his duty was to have done as Christ directed him, to have obeyed his command, and applied to the priests. We from this command of our Saviour, are taught, that as he hath ordained a standing ministry, he will always have those who are converted to him, seek for him in and by that ministry, and in the ways and means appointed. He referred Paul to Ananias, Cornelius to Peter, the Eunuch to Philip. There where he hath promised *to be always present*,‡ he will have those who sincerely desire him, seek for and sue to him; and there they shall always be assured to find him, if they look up to him, through the means as acting in and by them. For though the means and ceremonies now used in the church of God are in themselves a dead letter, yet by his immediate institution, they become efficacious and ob-

* St. Mark's words are very strong, εμβριμησαμενος αυτω, εξεβαλον αυτον—having *strictly and solemnly charged him, he forthwith dismissed him.* See Matt. xix. 30. and Doddridge's note on the place, in his Family Expositor.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 20. *Lo, I am with* YOU *always, even unto the end of the world.* See Bishop Beveridge's excellent sermon on this text. Vol. i. Serm. 1.

ligatory; nor can we have the least right, or the least reason to expect any justification from Christ, or sanctification from the Spirit, if we refuse to be baptized, and absent ourselves from the blessed communion. For these being means ordained of Christ himself to convey to us spiritual grace, we have no more reason to suppose, that we shall receive that grace without them, than a Leper had to suppose he should be cleansed without the legal purifications and ordinances. But neither will these avail us, unless we come to them as the Lepers did to the priests under the law, and as this did to Christ in the gospel, under a true and feeling sense of our sins, an hearty sorrow for all our offences, a fervent desire to be delivered from this body of death, and with firm faith and full persuasion that our mediator, who hath all power in heaven and earth, willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all should turn to him and live. With this temper, thus contrite, humble, penitent and believing, we must wait upon him in the means of grace, and we are then to our endless happiness assured, that this merciful High-priest will come out to meet us, speak the word, and *cleanse us* from all spiritual defilement.

IV. But vainly shall we hope for any other cure, and as we are all by nature leprous, all infected with this deadly poison, all spotted over with iniquity, all more or less under the power of sin, what must be the consequence, if we are not cleansed? *The wages of sin is death*—temporal, spiritual, and eternal. How infinitely blessed should we esteem ourselves, that we have such a physician to whom we may thus confidently apply, whose almighty word and sovereign touch is able to dispel the most inveterate maladies? Did we each one of us really labour beneath the miseries of a bodily leprosy, and were informed of such a physician, what earnest crowding, what pathetic suing, what endless ap-

plication, would there be to him?—O let us not condemn ourselves!—let us not be more remiss in the care of our immortal souls, less anxious for their everlasting health, than for that of poor perishing bodies, speedily to corrupt in nauseous putrefaction! Nor, with strange and unreasonable pride, deny this sickness of our souls, to which the scriptures give such infallible testimony, and to which our own hearts bear a testimony no less infallible.* And as we cannot deny that we are grievous sinners, miserable, spotted, filthy Lepers, why should we refuse to *wash and be clean?* why should we refuse to come to the pure fountain *opened for all uncleanness?*—why should we not rather receive the free gift of a cure offered us, than proudly, vainly, and foolishly expect it from our own weak means, our own poor and insignificant endeavous? We, alas, who have need of an atonement not only for our greater sins, but for our very best services: we who have such continual need of our advocate and propitiation: we who cannot do one good work, or perform one duty, read, hear, pray, communicate, fast or give alms, without the most sorrowful mixture of sin and imperfection—the cause of the good man's complaint and tears all the days of his pilgrimage, through this valley of death.

But the natural man, *whose eyes are not opened*, hath no such opinion of himself or his duties: he thinks in a more noble and elevated manner; and is persuaded, that his own divine reason,† the eye

* Read the lixth chapter of Isaiah and lxiv. 6. *We are* ALL *as an unclean thing, our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.*

† I speak here of mere natural, unenlightened *reason*, which it must be acknowledged, is but a blind guide to follow in the broad day of *revelation*. For *true enlightened reason*, I would always contend in the pursuit of religious matters: since that too is *revelation*.

of the soul, is very sufficient to guide him aright; his own works very capable of meriting future blessedness. Alas, to be proud in one's own eyes is a melancholy delusion indeed. *Seest thou a man that is wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than him!* Very far is such an one from that infant, child-like habit of mind and disposition, with which our Lord assures us each must be blessed, who would be his disciple, and receive that heavenly wisdom, which is not for the wise of this world, but for those, only who are wise to him.* And yet one would conceive no extraordinary wisdom in any of our strong advocates for Deism, or the faith of heathen men,—for can it be wisdom to counteract the decrees of Omnipotence, can it be wisdom to refuse obedience to the commands of an Eternal Judge: can it be wisdom to reject a gospel, which the Son of God descended from on high to establish; can it be wisdom to reject a Saviour whose infinite love hath purchased for all who will receive it, life and glory, and that by shedding his own most precious blood; can it be wisdom, to reject that Saviour, to refuse that salvation, to trample under foot that blood, the infinite price and value of which, endless ages will be too short to magnify and extol? O call them no longer wise, feed not their unhappy vanity, with such specious terms, but let them know their folly; proclaim aloud their ingratitude and danger, shew them their sinfulness, and let them be told, spite of all their proud boasting, "they are only the sinful children of a sinful father;" that so, ere it be too late, they may return and repent, that iniquity may not prove their ruin!

Open their eyes, Eternal fountain of all light and

* See Matt. xviii. 3.

love—suffer them not, O God of mercy, suffer them not to perish in their blood; but bring them home in true faith and repentance to thee, that their hearts desire being at length lifted up to thee, thou mayest speak the word and their leprosy be cleansed!

V. Happy is it for the soul, that perceives its leprosy; happy is it for the man, who searching into his own heart, finds there this dreadful disease, and flying to the only *priest* and *bishop* of his soul, rends his garments, and in sincere sorrow proclaims himself *unclean, unclean.* And would you but examine yourselves in sincerity, would you but seriously cast your eyes upon yourselves, your duty, and your future expectations, the disease would soon abundantly manifest itself. You would be convinced of your utter sinfulness. If unconvinced of this, all other knowledge is unavailing: For what is the blood of Christ, and the unction of the holy Spirit to him who wants no cleansing, as convinced of no uncleanness through sin; who wants no holiness, as already sufficiently just, honest and upright to carry him to heaven! But deceive not yourselves: indeed one would judge that impossible; lay your hearts and consciences now open before God, survey your past lives, look upon your present dispositions; and see what a multitude of evils in a long succession, crowd thick to judge and condemn you! See what pride of heart, what vanity, and self-applause, what envy, malice, and anger, consuming rancour, and gnawing jealousies; what a love of the world and all its vain pomps and vanities; what a dreadful company of evil thoughts and desires, lusts, secret and unperpetrated, lusts of the will and intention, fiery passions, evil concupiscences, inordinate affections;—what vices in their full power and strength, the outward sores and biles,

the manifestations of the inward taint and corruption: what extortion, covetousness, drunkenness, adultery, uncleanness, and many other filthy works of the flesh: Add to these, what blasphemy and contempt of God; how little regard and love for his service; how very little regard to his most holy laws, and the cause of those brethren, whom he hath commanded us *to love as ourselves*—alas, alas, how deficient are even the best in this divine love, which notwithstanding is the consummation of every duty, and without which all becomes *mere sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal!*—Let us consider these things—Let us *prove our ownselves*, and examine whether they have not polluted our souls; whether we are not wholly covered over and defiled with their contagion—whether they have not the full dominion and absolute sway over us!—Certain it is, these are the fruits of the flesh, the *natural births of the old man: and if to the flesh we thus continue to sow, of the flesh we can hope to reap nothing save corruption.* But knowing the fatal consequence of this disorder, if uncured, knowing the sure wages of sin, if unrepented of, O let us make haste to be delivered therefrom, to remove the heavy burden from our back, and to take upon us, instead, the light and easy yoke of the meek and lowly Jesus! He alone by his cleansing blood, and sanctifying Spirit can give perfect soundness to us, and so cleanse our polluted faculties, as to restore them to health, and a power of performing their several duties; he alone can change and purify the heart; all human power in this respect is unavailing; and he will assuredly change and purify it, if we come to him, and truly request him to bestow that desirable blessing.

What joy unfeigned should it give every Christian, to find this change wrought in him, to have a glorious testimony, that Christ hath spoken with power, and healed the soul of its leprosy? To find

his former tempers and desires perfectly changed and separated from those things, wherein they before delighted? To find the love of God taking place in his heart of the vain love of the world: and an anxious seeking after sin, the *lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, driven out of its former strong hold, by a far more anxious seeking after righteousness, and the things which pertain unto God? To perceive his ear no more delighted with vain conversation, but as *redeemed therefrom by the blood of Christ*, delighting only in all *holy conversation, and godliness*, and shewing therefrom *his works with meekness of wisdom?* To perceive his hands no more pleased with the deeds of evil-doers, but rejoicing only *to do good, glad to distribute, ready to communicate*, and labouring always in the work of the Lord: to perceive his feet no more swift to *shed blood*, his own and his neighbours by the acts of sin, but supported by the grace of God, running gladly in the way of his commandments? And,

VI. As such a change must surely convince him of the power of him who wrought it, so should it enlarge his heart with thankfulness. What infinite satisfaction must the Leper have felt, when he perceived himself delivered from his loathsome disease, when he found his faculties restored to their former health and soundness?* But greater, far greater joy will every sinner have in his heart, who finds the load of sin removed, who is no longer under the terror, the guilt and power of it, but rejoicing always in the Lord, continues diligent in every good work, is careful to obey his master's will, and scru-

* We have a very instructive lesson of this sort, and at the same time a striking picture of the ingratitude of the human race, in the *Samaritan Leper*, the only one of the *ten* cleansed by our Saviour, who was found *returning to give glory to God, when he saw that he was healed.* See Luke xvii. 15, &c.

pulous to perform it, in every the least particular to the utmost of his power and knowledge; thus alone securing to himself the blessing conferred; and thus if persevering faithful to the end, certain to be crowned with the crown of life, and to be rewarded with bliss unspeakable!

O happy consummation of a life devoted to God and holiness—devoutly to be wished, fervently to be desired of us—And we may all obtain this happy consummation; the Son of God hath power enough to save, and love enough to incline him to exert that power on our behalf: we have misery enough to cause us to come in humble contrition to the foot of his cross, and to move his compassion towards us. And when so coming and falling down before it, sovereign grace will distil therefrom; will insinuate itself like balm into all our wounds, heal, cleanse, comfort and restore us to life and favour. Our own unworthiness can be no impediment, if we *desire* to be *more worthy;* if we exert and put forth that desire in prayer, Christ will hear us, and if he hear us, he will help us, and if he help us, we shall be safe indeed—for if *he be for us, who can be against us?*—Come therefore, ye leprous burdened souls, come and cleave to the mercy and power of your redeeming God; give up yourselves, your souls, and bodies to be wholly ruled and governed by him —take especial heed, that you obey all his divine commands, and that with cheerful hope you attend him in all his appointed means—then doubt not, but he will put forth his most pure and holy hand, touch your souls, and say, *I will, be thou clean.*

And O thou powerful and most compassionate High-priest, who art touched with the feeling of our infirmities, disdain not, we beseech thee to come among us, and with great might succour us; extend thy saving hand, and with the finger of thy power, thy blessed Spirit, so touch and convince us

all of the evil of sin, that we may come to thee in sincere contrition, and with fervent faithful prayer implore thy divine assistance. And let us, O bountiful Jesu, let us not pray in vain: shew forth the riches of thy power and thy mercy towards us: *speak the word only, and thy servants shall be healed,* destroy all sin in us, and implant in our hearts, by thy grace, all the fruits of the blessed Spirit. O take those hearts into thine own guidance and government; enable them to keep thy commandments, and so fulfil thy holy promise of coming with thy Father to dwell therein! And seeing we are unworthy through our manifold sins and offences even to present one prayer unto thee, we entreat thee to pardon the sins of these our best, though most imperfect services, to deal not with us, according to our merits, but thine own mercies, and graciously looking upon us, with an eye of fatherly love and pity, we beseech thee in all our dangers and necessities to stretch forth thy right hand, to help and defend us—that protected by thy power and saved by thy mercy here, we may rejoice for ever hereafter, in thy love and praise! To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God, be ascribed all power and glory in the church, throughout all ages, world without end. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE IV.

THE GOOD CENTURION.

MATTHEW viii. 13.

And Jesus said unto the Centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

JESUS having finished his sermon on the mount, as soon as he came down from thence, to shew that his words and doctrine pertained both to the Jews and Gentiles, performed two miracles: the one for a *Jew*, a Leper, *who came to him*, the other for a *Gentile*, a Centurion, or Roman Captain, who was stationed at Capernaum. A servant of this Centurion, who was *dear* to him, whose virtue and honesty, obedience and industry made him *very valuable** in the eyes of his master, lay at home sick of the palsy, in the most grievous stage of the disease, tormented with insufferable pains‖ and ready to die. The Centurion, hearing of Jesus‡ (whose fame

* εντιμος, of great price.

‖ Δεινως βασανιζομενος.

‡ ———*Postquam mortalia sensit*
Tentamenta nihil, nil artes posse medentum,
Auxilium, cœleste petit.———

began now to be spread abroad, and to which his miraculous cure performed at a distance upon the son of a nobleman in this same city‖ must have greatly contributed) but not thinking himself worthy to come unto him, engaged, as St. Luke informs us, the elders of the Jews in his cause; and sent them to beseech this blessed person, of whom he had conceived such high notions, on the behalf of his afflicted servant, *That he would* COME *and* HEAL *him, that he would* COME *and* SAVE* *him,* from *torment* and *death.* And they performed their office punctually: for they came and besought our Lord instantly and earnestly; and strengthened their importunity by informing him, that the Centurion was worthy for whom he should do this, *for he loveth* OUR *nation,* say they, and as a proof of it, *hath built us a synagogue.* Jesus, ever ready to do good, made them no reply, but immediately went with them.

The Centurion, hearing that he was coming, moved by the most remarkable humility, and deeming his house unworthy the presence of so divine a guest, immediately dismissed his friends to desire the *Master* not to give himself so great trouble as to enter under the roof of one who judged himself so far from being worthy of this great condescension, that he thought himself not even worthy to come to Jesus, much less to have Jesus come to him; his humble request was, that he would but deign to speak the word only, since he was assured, *that* would be sufficient for the recovery of his servant. But humility never yet prevented Christ's approach: nay rather, the greater the humility, the sooner will

‖ This event preceded the present not much in time. See John iv. 43—53.

* Διασωσῃ.

he manifest his divine presence. And therefore he proceeded on towards the Centurion's house: coming near to which, the Centurion himself, (as St. Matthew informs us, and thus the sacred historians are easily reconciled) hastened out to meet him; and, with the most profound veneration, the deepest self-abasement, and the liveliest faith, *Lord,* said he, *trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the* WORD *only, and my servant shall be healed.* For I fully and firmly apprehend and believe the divinity and excellence of thy power, from a comparative view of my own office and station; wherein, though I am indeed subject myself to the authority of others, yet have I soldiers under me, who are obedient even to my commands; *for I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it.* Now if I, who am thus under the command and authority of others, can have my will performed by a word speaking;—how much rather canst thou who art the *Lord,** the *Jehovah,* the expected *Messiah,* and who, as is manifest from thy mighty works already performed, hast all things in thy power:—how much rather canst thou do, what seemeth thee good, by speaking that *word* which all the creatures, thy subjects and servants, stand ready in a moment to fulfil! When Jesus heard this notable confession, he marvelled,—as *man,* he marvelled at that faith, which as *God,* he himself had

* St. Jerom upon this place, says, *Intra corporis tegmen, divinitatem latentem videbat, sciens non id sibi profuturum, quod etiam ab incredulis videbatur, sed id quod latebat intrinsecus;* "that he saw within the covering of the body, the *divinity lying hid,* and knew, that *not* that, which even unbelievers saw, would profit him, but that which lay concealed within."

given: and turning himself about to the people that followed, he said unto them, *Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in* ISRAEL, not in the *chosen* and *peculiar* people, as in this *Gentile.* And influenced by the like humility and faith with him, I declare unto you, as an important truth, many Gentiles shall come from the East and West, from the utmost parts of the earth, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, the realm of everlasting glory. While the children of the kingdom the *Jews, to whom pertaineth the adoption,* &c. shall be rejected, shall be cast out—even into outer darkness;* there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Having thus taken an occasion to give the Jews, who were present, an alarming admonition, the force of which was irresistible from the ruler's own testimony to the worth of this Roman commander; he dismissed him with this encouraging reply, *Go thy way, and as thou hast believed,* (according to thy faith) *so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour;* as they that were sent, soon discovered, upon their return to the house, where they found the servant, that had

* There is a prodigious emphasis in the original words which our translation in a great degree hath preserved—Εκβληθησονται εις το σκοτος το Εξωτερον. They shall not only be *cast out,*—that were bad enough—but they shall *be cast out into darkness,*—what can be worse? Behold they shall be *cast out* into σκοτος το Εξωτερον, the *very outer darkness*: and how is this augmented by the next words, *there shall be weeping and gnashing, &c.!* The very reading of these terrors are pain enough—but, what, oh, what must be the enduring of them?——" Many commentators have observed (says one) that this phrase which is often used after the kingdom of heaven has been compared to a banquet, contains a beautiful allusion to the lustre of those illuminated rooms, in which such feasts were generally celebrated; as opposed to that darkness which surrounded those, who by night were turned out. But it also sometimes goes yet farther, when the persons excluded are supposed to be thrown into a dark dungeon."

been sick, that even now was grievously tormented and ready to die, perfectly restored to life and health.

In this story three particulars more especially demand our attention.

I. The great humility of this Centurion,—so far was he from thinking himself, worthy of the presence of Jesus, under his roof, that he did not think himself even *worthy to come* to him, and therefore he sends the elders of the Jews, and his friends to intercede for him.

II. The faith of the Centurion—which was so great as to cause Christ himself to *marvel*, and which was so sincere, that it obtained even all he desired—*as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*

III. The remarkable prophecy, which our Lord here delivers concerning the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles; which gracious dispensation, so happy for us, who are of the Gentiles, he now first mentions, to shew, that humility and faith, like the Centurion's will render all, in every place and nation, accepted with him, *who is no respecter of persons.*

To each of these I shall speak in their order, but more fully to the two first particulars; since it is this deep *humility*, and this *lively faith* only, which can cause our Saviour readily to come to us; and perform for our souls, which lie sick at home, that which *we desire* for them:—and may he by his divine Spirit, so enlighten all our eyes, that we may see ourselves as we are by nature, in the condition of this Centurion's servant, like this Centurion be found strong in faith; like him, in humility apply to Christ: like him succeed on their behalf, and be dismissed with this encouraging answer, *Go thy*

way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee!

I. First then, we are to consider, the great humility of this Centurion. You see how differently the Jews* rate his merits, from what he does himself; they tell our Lord, that, "he is *worthy* for whom he should do this; they—full, as they were, of their own righteousness, *seeking to establish which*, (St. Paul says) *they did not submit unto the righteousness of God*—they proclaim his *merits* aloud, and declare, that his *good works* did indeed *deserve* the desired blessing: and Christ, by his readiness to grant the request, sufficiently shewed, that he was *well pleased* with these good works of the Centurion, whom he knew to be himself very far from *confiding* in them, very far from esteeming himself, as the Jews esteemed him; which if he had done, the success would have been widely different. Though they came with a *Lord, he is worthy;* behold how opposite is the Centurion's confession! *I thought myself*, saith he, *not even worthy to come unto thee, O Lord, much less can I think myself worthy, that* THOU *shouldst come under* MY ROOF;† he saw the imperfection of his faith, and of all his works; he saw his own wretched sinfulness, unworthiness

* Dr. Doddridge in his *improvement* of this history, a very pleasing and excellent part of his commentary, observes with that spirit of good nature, which is so peculiar to him, "We see the force of real goodness to conquer the most inveterate prejudices: The elders of the Jews at Capernaum turn petitioners for a Gentile, for a Roman Centurion: so may we disarm the virulency of a party spirit, and conciliate the friendship of those, who otherwise might have their *eyes upon us for evil!* See *Family Expos.* Vol. i. p. 341.

† St Austin observes, that this Centurion, *dicendo se indignum, præstitit dignum, non in cujus parietes, sed in cujus cor verbum Dei Christus intraret*—by saying that he was *unworthy*, rendered himself *worthy* not of receiving the Word of God, Christ under his roof only, but into his *heart!* See his works. Tom. 10. Serm. 6.

and weakness in the sight of a holy God; and therefore perfectly humbled before him, disclaimed every title to *any merit*, and in lowly dependance threw himself at the feet of Jesus.

And yet this Centurion, if any man had much wherein to glory; he, as is plain from that regard which he shewed to the Jewish nation (*for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue*) had embraced the doctrines of the prophets, and was an humble waiter for the kingdom of the Messiah, one of those, who amongst the Jews were called *devout persons*, receiving neither circumcision, nor the ceremonies of the law, but the doctrine of the prophets only, concerning the *hope of Israel*, and the *expectation of all nations;* he shewed his zeal for this doctrine, by building a synagogue, a great and expensive work, where it might be preached; and was what God, by the prophet Isaiah, calls *one of the nursing children of the church:* And besides this regard which he shewed to God and works of piety, he also shewed a true love to man, true and sincere benevolence, by that kind concern, which he had for his *servant*, and that at a time when servants were esteemed little better than the veriest slaves. He was none of your *first table-men* only, (a dangerous and absurd distinction made sometimes by Christian writers, especially those of the last age) but a zealous observer of all God's commandments: as this instance abundantly proves, at the same time that it serves to manifest the particular goodness of his mind: "great variety of suitors resorted to Christ, one came to him for a son, another for a daughter, a third for himself: I see none come for his *servant*, but this one Centurion; neither was he a better man than a master; his servant is sick; he doth not drive him out of doors, but takes care of him at home; neither doth he stand gazing by his bedside, but seeks forth; he seeks forth not to

vain and improfitable means, but to Christ; he seeks to Christ not with a cold and fashionable relation, but with a vehement aggravation of the disease. Had the master been sick, the faithfullest servant could have done no more. He is unworthy to be well served, that will not sometimes wait on his followers; notions of inferiority must not breed in us a neglect of charitable offices; so must we look down upon our servants here on earth, as that we must still look up to our master in heaven."* And thus did this Centurion, both regarding his master in heaven, and his servant on earth; thus shewing true love to God, as well as to man, and having on this account, (as much as any man) something whereof to boast; yet so far is he from any syllable of merit, or *self-righteousness*, that he declares himself utterly *unworthy*, *unworthy* even to come to Christ, much more *unworthy* to be visited by this divine and all-powerful Lord!

How admirable a pattern of *humility* is this!—what a glass for every child of man to behold himself in! How much should it teach us to discard every the least tendency to self-esteem and self-applause, while yet we are as diligent to obtain just reason for it as this Centurion had! Absolute self-renunciation amidst continual works of faith and labours of love is the true *humility*—and not that which is falsely pretended as a covering for our real want of all deserving, or as a wretched cloak for spiritual pride. This *humility* causeth us always to have a quick eye to the evils of our own heart,

* See Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*, Vol. ii. p. 52. And it is with great satisfaction that I take this opportunity to recommend to my worthy reader's acquaintance this pious and fine writer's works, but more particularly his *Contemplations*—and I dare pronounce, that the more intimate you, my good reader and this holy Bishop become, the more thanks I shall receive for introducing you to the familiarity of so wise a friend.

and as quick a one to the virtues of others; to esteem ourselves in the lowest degree—for the humble man is well acquainted with his own sins and unworthiness, better, far better, than he can be with those of others, and therefore he prefers all others to himself. This humility shews us ourselves; and, informs us, that though indeed unworthy of any the least favour from God, nay, justly meriting his severest indignation—yet, as desirous to shew our most imperfect love and gratitude for his mercies in Christ Jesus, we must be careful to maintain all those *good works*, which he *hath ordained for us to walk in;* and after having done all we can, to approve ourselves faithful in that state of life, wherein it hath pleased God to place us, we must be content to acknowledge ourselves but *unprofitable servants;* and be ready to say in sincerity, *enter not into judgment, with thy servant O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

The best and most exalted Christians are ever most humble: and it is their humility which makes them the best Christians; for they are ever best in the sight of God, who are worst, even nothing, in their own: and in truth this self-annihilation, this esteeming ourselves as mere sinful dust and ashes before God, is a mark at which we are all bound to aim; and without a constant labour to attain it, we cannot be the disciples of Christ, who hath taught us, *that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted;* a sentence well worthy our observation, and repeated more frequently than any other of our Lord's in the Gospel. It is this humility which procures God's favour to us, and which doth for every man what it did for this Centurion, renders Christ ever willing to come, and grant the request of his lips—*I will come and heal him*, said Jesus immediately; had the Centurion *exalted himself*, made proud boasting of his own desert, of his re-

gard to the Jewish nation, the synagogue he had built, the care he had for his servant, of his virtue, religion, and humanity, with a "*God, I thank thee,*" joined to it; Christ would have turned from him with indignation as from the hypocritical pharisees, and his servant had never been cured; but he acted a contrary part, he *humbled himself, and so was exalted.*

Would you therefore receive the blessings and *exalting* benefits of the gospel, see that like this Roman, you are humbled in your own eyes; learn from him to place no value in your own performances, but to confess your utter want of all deserving in the sight of a just and holy God; labour to be as exemplary as he was in the love of God and man, and you will certainly be as humble: for "*love* alone is truly humble, because she alone thanks God for all the good she sees in others, and always inspires those, whose heart she has purified with an earnest and sincere desire of seeing their brethren preferred to themselves in every thing."* And as there is a natural and necessary connection between these graces of *humility, love,* and *faith,* of consequence the one will promote and establish the other; the higher your love, the deeper your humility will be; the deeper your humility, the more firm and lively your faith; and it is God's infallible word and firm decree, *as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee,* which was the reward of the Centurion's *faith*;

II. The Second thing I proposed to consider; and may the giver of all faith so root and ground us in the abovementioned humility and love, that our faith may be founded theron as on a rock, and we with a single eye to God, walk worthy our high voca-

* This is a remark of St Austin's, as you will find by reading the *Characters of Charity,* p. 19.

tion and calling, as fully persuaded, *that what he hath promised, he is also able to perform.*

This faith of the Centurion, you perceive, as thus rooted in *humility*, towered very high, and prevailed even with heaven: and it is a wonderful consideration to think, that so great is the *victory of faith*,* that it can *overcome not only the world*, but God also, (if I may be allowed so to speak) who gives himself, as it were, into the power of faith, and declares, that *all things are possible to him that believeth.*

The Centurion believed and confessed, that Jesus was the LORD: that of necessity, his divine power was unlimited, and he could do, whatsoever seemed him good—*Speak the* WORD ONLY, said he, *and my servant shall be healed.* As much as to say, thou art divine and all-powerful; thou, as *Lord*, hast all things under thy command and direction: speak therefore the *word* only; give but the command, and thy ministers, all diseases, as well as every creature, shall obey thee: and that *word* which could say, *Let there be light, and there was light*, which *could speak, and it was done, command, and it stood fast:* which could say to the seas, *Be still*, and to the

* I must request of the reader, whenever I speak of *faith* as a simple grace, not to understand me, as though I meant *any bare assent* only, any bold persuasion, or mere act of believing, but always such a faith, as is founded in *humility*, and accompanied with *divine love—a faith working by love.*—Seeing I do from my heart believe, that *a faith*, however distinguished or however nicely defined, which is not built upon *true repentance* and accompanied with the *fruits of holiness*,—with all good works,—is only a *faith of devils*, and will never avail to any man's salvation. I speak here of *living acting men*, and mean not to puzzle the cause as some have done, with distinctions concerning dying people, and the instance of the thief on the cross so often produced. This is another consideration; it is not ours to limit the mercy of God: one of the Fathers upon this instance observes very wisely—"That we have *one* such instance given us to prevent *despair*, and but *one*, to prevent *presumption.*"

winds, *Peace*—that almighty *word* shall be found prevailing in behalf of the paralytic servant." And he builds his confidence upon a very rational presumption, even his own power over these that were subject to him, and who were ready to execute his commands at a *word:* to whom he had no need to say more, than *Come*, and they *came*, *Go*, and they *went*, *Do this*, and they *did it.* Much more, therefore, reasoned he, can this divine person, who is Lord of all, by speaking one word, not only deliver from the most inveterate disease, but perform whatsoever he pleaseth; seeing all nature is at his command, and every creature stands ready to execute his orders.

How simple and natural is this comparison, how strong the reasoning deduced from it—how obvious the fact to all our notices, and yet how very rarely applied by us, as by this Centurion, to strengthen our faith, and build up our confidence in God! We cannot but believe, that there is a God. It is a great question with me, whether any man *really* disbelieved the existence of a deity. And if we believe him to be *God*, that is, the king,* ruler, and disposer of all things in heaven and earth, we must of necessity, acknowledge his almighty power: if he say the word, it must be established, beyond all controversy,† for who can resist the will of Omni-

* The notion of a deity and providence are so naturally linked together, that none who confess the one have ever presumed to deny the other, unless some of the libertine school of *Epicurus, Epicuri de grege Porcos.*

† The inherent conviction of this truth raised, according to Cicero, the Romans above all other nations—*Pietate ac religione*, saith he, *atque hac una sapientiâ quod Deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes, nationesque superavimus.* By piety and religion—and this wisdom only, that we have perceived all things to be disposed and governed by the providence of the immortal Gods, have we conquered all nations and people.——A Remark worthy our more enlightened times. See *Orator, de Arusp. respons.* n. 19.

potence? Many—many,—even heathens go thus far, but another step is wanting; we may see and confess the greatness and power of God, while we do not see him as *our* God, as *our* Father through Christ, and as willing to exert that power in our cause; and therefore we do not apply that power to ourselves, as this Centurion did.—Could we once so believe, and so apply, could we once behold Christ as *ours*, yea, and all things he hath as *ours*,* then like this Centurion, we should triumph, and like him we should be blest—*as we believe, so should it be done unto us.* If we could once by faith see, that all diseases, all calamities, and all evils, as well as blessings come and go by the word and permission of God, (which in truth is only believing what the Apostle saith, *that all things work together for good, to them that love God)* we should then be happy in full dependance on a resignation to his will, we should always carefully sue to that *word*, and in every exigency, apply it to our souls,—*only speak the word, and thy servant shall be healed!*

For be the faith of man, what it will, the power and efficacy of the word of Christ is fixed and certain, it remains always the same; to it we can never add, and from it we can never diminish; to apply this its standing efficacy to ourselves is the business of faith; ours is to seek and pray, that this word in all its power may be brought home to our hearts and exerted on our behalf; and to this purpose nothing can be more conducive, than the example before us of the Centurion; like whom if we have faith, *so shall it be done unto us.*

* St. Paul speaks thus for the comfort and encouragement of believers; *Therefore let no man glory in men,* for all things are yours. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come:* All are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. iii. 21.

And, you may observe, that our Saviour not only in the present case, but in various others, lays down this position—*as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee,—according to thy faith, be it unto thee—Believe, ye, that I am able to do this,* said he to the blind men? *Yea, Lord,* replied they, then said he, *according to your faith, be it unto you.** And herein he hath manifested at once his great wisdom and love: for the soul burdened under the sense of its manifold sinfulness, might well thus reason within itself. "I do indeed desire and ask, believe and hope, but who can tell what will be the issue hereof, or how God will regard me? It is true, I am not a stranger to my own imperfect hopes and wishes, but who can tell, whether the great and high God will grant these my wishes, or whether, imperfect as they are, they will ever be brought into act?" To take away and utterly remove all such scruples, and doubting from the mind, Christ hath given us this divine maxim: *as thou hast believed, according to thy faith, so be it done unto thee.*

So that, when the heart from and by the *word* conceives faith, hope, desire and prayer, we are not to enter into the counsels or decrees of God, but to remember, that this is his established purpose and rule; we are to remember that he wills the thing which is the object of our desire, just in such manner, after such a sort, and in such a degree as the heart from *his word,* by the Holy Spirit hath conceived faith, hope, desire and prayer. For he declares for the comfort of be-

* Matt. ix. 28. Hence in our liturgy, agreeably to this important maxim of our Lord's, we pray.—*Priest.* O Lord, let thy mercy be shewed upon us. Answer. *As we do put our trust in thee.* So they who *put no trust* in Christ, (to whom these prayers in the *Litany* are peculiarly addressed) with their own *mouths* cut themselves off from any *mercy* from him—*shew thy mercy, As we trust in thee.* An awakening reflection to the *formal repeater* of these prayers. See my Sermon on the *Sinful Christian condemned by his own Prayers.*

lievers, that he will give the desire of the heart, nay, and *do the very will of those who fear him. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,* saith Christ, *ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* So that hence every Christian may rightly determine from his *faith,* (when it has its true foundation in the *word*) what is the will and good purpose of God towards him; and therefore as St. Paul observes, the word *being nigh us, we have no need to say, who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep, &c.* to search out God's decrees; for the faith in our own hearts may fully inform us of his determination: *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, &c.*

And this testimony and mark of faith is sure and infallible, because formed from and built upon the word and sure promise of him, who cannot lie. I dwell upon this particular, *that it is conceived from, and built upon the* WORD *of* GOD: since I have found some, who neglect this only sure and infallible rule and test of faith; and who speak and judge of their own faith solely from some certain internal feelings and sensations, or *deep workings of an inward Christ;* thus rejecting the outward word of God, and setting up the inward voice of the Saviour, as their rule and guide. This is the very depth of infernal policy, the sure road to spiritual infatuation, and the certain destruction of pure genuine Christianity. Take therefore especial care that your faith be firmly grounded upon, and wholly derived from the sacred and most precious word of God; which is our only unerring guide: the direction and instruction of God's good Spirit through which, if we forsake, no man can tell the errors and delusions into which we shall make an headlong plunge. And indeed if the cunning craftiness of

men or devils can persuade you to STAND STILL,* and wait, as they call it, can drive you from the means of grace, and cause you to rest in mere *inward feelings*, of all things the most delusive, and of all things the best handles for Satan to work with; if such should be the case, none can tell whither you will be carried, what monstrous births will be produced from such unnatural conceptions, what perverse practices from such unscriptural doctrines! May all such be abolished from the Christian world: and true living faith, agreeable to Christ's holy word, abound and increase still more and more! But to return;

Since then we learn, that our success with God is ever according to our faith, that as *we believe, so it shall be done to us:* we may hence very fully resolve another question, which is, "why he seems to be less liberal to us in his gifts and graces, than we expect? For faith, according to the usual metaphor, is as the hand receiving, which if it be closed

* This is the known, the dangerous and destructive maxim of the Moravians, to say much of whom in this place would be needless, as the world hath been well acquainted with their delusions by some late able writers. But I would ask, whether much of Mr. Law's late writings doth not tend to this same evil? Let the following stand as a specimen—"I will give you an infallible touchstone. Retire from all conversation only for a month. Neither *write* nor *read* nor debate any thing with yourself. Stop all the former workings of your heart and mind, and stand all this month in prayer to God. If your heart cannot give itself up in *this manner* to prayer, be *fully assured* you are an *infidel!*" Sad assurance indeed! See *Spirit of prayer*, Part II. p. 163, and particularly p. 4. In the *Spirit of love* he peremptorily advises against the use of means, "Seek for help no other way, neither from men, nor books, but wholly leave yourselves to God."—How much is this great and good man's neglect of the sacred volumes to be deplored of all Christians—and what a lesson is it to us, to prize and diligently meditate upon these volumes—neither going to the right hand, nor to the left, but as they direct and advise us! God grant all Christians this wisdom!

and kept shut, while it hath only to *open* and *receive;* no man will say, that it is the fault of the *giver*, that it receives nothing. God is indeed a most bountiful giver; and if we can extend and open the hand of faith to receive, he will never withdraw his hand from giving. He will fill it with the plenteousness of his bounty—If we open our hand, but a little, we can receive but little; if our faith be weak, it may yet notwithstanding be true and saving faith: but we can receive only according to what we have, not according to what we have not. To comfort feeble and doubtful Christians we have a lively example of the saving nature of weak faith in the father, who with tears said to Jesus, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief*; and this should be our constant prayer; for even the disciples themselves found it necessary to make this petition, *Lord, increase our faith!* and no way is so sure to attain it, as fervent constant prayer; this, if sincere, will at length gain us an increase of faith; and of consequence an increase of humility, of holy love, and heavenly joy.

The Centurion opened his hand wide; his faith was great, so great as to cause even Christ to marvel; and he received accordingly: *as he believed so was it done unto him;* he believed that Christ *with a word* speaking, was able to heal his servant, he found that his faith was well-grounded, for his *servant was healed in the self-same hour.* One great reason why we have not the faith of this Centurion is because we have not his humility: And we have not his humility, because we are not so active in all good works as he was; for the true Christian is never satisfied, but when doing some duty, or engaged in some good office, that may testify his love to God and to man: *always abounding in the work of the Lord;* and never after having done all he can, will say other than this Centurion, that he is *not worthy* the least of Christ's favours. As igno-

rance always abounds most with self-conceit, so small advances in virtue, are apt to inspire the mind, with greater degrees of self dependance. The more holy a Christian is, the more meanly he thinks of himself: and the more he does, he still sees the more his vast deficiences in duty; yet will he never cease or slacken his diligence, but with St. Paul, *forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before; he presses toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* They are but Christians *in name*, vain pofessors and hypocritical talkers, who speak of Christ, and make their boast of his name, while they are wanting in an exact discharge of their duty towards God and man, while they are strangers to true evangelical holiness, these are they, *who* with Judas, *betray the Son of man with a* KISS. He and he only is the real Christian, who doing all he can, like this centurion, to testify his love to God, and his love to man, yet, after all, is glad and willing to resign and give up even the appearance of self-righteousness, to throw himself at the feet of Jesus, as an humble, worthless sinner, without any the least hope, trust, or confidence in aught, save the infinite mercy and merits of his dying and glorified Redeemer. Such a total self-renunciation, such an abdication of all self-dependance, such a full reliance on the meritorious blood of the Son of God will assuredly prevail for a blessing, and gain the happy soul a joyful *seat, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven*—which is part of the *prophecy* delivered by our Saviour on this occasion:

III. The Third and last thing which I proposed briefly to consider. This was a subject of all others most offensive to the Jews, but of all others the most important to the Gentile world, who were now shut out from the covenant of grace, and now in that

very darkness into which the Jews were afterwards cast by reason of their unbelief. Christ dwells frequently and particularly upon this blessed dispensation, both in his miracles, parables, and discourses, as we shall have occasion to remark hereafter, as being that great *mystery*, that *eternal purpose*, and *predestination* of God in Christ Jesus, which in *other Ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, and of the *same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.**

This Gentile captain afforded him a full opportunity to make known this important mystery, and to set forth by his example, the terms of acceptance.‡ For declaring *that he had not found* so great FAITH, no, not in Israel, not amongst that chosen and pecular people, to whom so many privileges and so many advantages above the Gentiles, had been granted, whence more abundant fruits might have reasonably been expected—He adds with great authority, *I say unto you, that many from the east and from the west*, from the remotest parts of the Gentile world, led on by like humility and faith with this Centurion, *shall come* into and accept the offers of the kingdom of grace here upon earth, and *shall sit down* in full and everlasting fruition of the kingdom of glory with the chosen patriarchs, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: All seated at one table, as admitted into the same covenant of grace at

* See the third chapter to the Ephesians, which is entitled, the *hidden mystery* that the Gentiles should be saved.

‡ Henry observes upon this History, that Matthew annexing this cure to that of the leper, who was a Jew, intimates this: "the *leprous Jews* Christ touched and cured, for he preached *personally* to them; but the *paralytic Gentiles* he cured *at a distance*: for to them he did not go in person; but *sent his word and healed them*: yet in them he was more magnified.

the head of which the patriarchs are placed, to whom the promise of the seed was given, and who in the days of their pilgrimage, looked forward with a longing eye and lively faith to the *expected rising of the sun of righteousness on earth: A light to lighten the Gentiles.* Thus our Saviour confirmed the prophecy of Malachi, which hath an obvious reference to this place: *For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, said the Lord of hosts.*

Such was the blessing foretold to the Gentile world; as comfortable, as the curse denounced against Israel is terrible; whom no natural privileges, no boasted descent from Abraham, no *adoption, glory, covenants, giving of the law, services, promises, fathers,* while they themselves were *disobedient* and *unbelieving,* could preserve from the certain fruits of *infidelity* and *iniquity.* But the *children of the kingdom,* saith Christ, they who were the natural heirs of it, *shall be cast out into outer darkness,* that *darkness* wherein the Gentiles sometime walked, and which fell upon Israel, when the light of grace was removed from them, *when their eyes were darkened that they could not see,* and they were cast out from the knowledge and favour of God: the sure and sad consequence of which is that other and more horrible *darkness,* to which the present is but a preface, and wherein they must dwell who are utterly rejected from the kingdom of grace, and where, horrible to think—there is not the least glimpse or ray of light,* the least dawn

* Milton's description of this place of horror deserves attention:

At once as far as angels ken, he views
The dismal situation waste and wild:

of hope, the least shadow of comfort, but only everlasting anguish of spirit, vexation and horror and fury, sad lamenting, and weeping and gnashing of teeth!

What infinite reason have we then to bless and adore *the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity, but towards us goodness; if we continue in his goodness, otherwise we also shall be cut off.* For to use the same apostle's arguments, *if God spared not the natural branches,* it behoves us to take heed, *lest he also spare us not.* And as he hath pleased in much mercy not only in this Centurion, but all through his holy word, to give us lively examples of the sure means of acceptance with him; we may be certain beyond dispute, that without them we shall never be accepted of him. *If because of unbelief* the natural branches *were broke off, and we stand only by faith: let us not be high-minded, but fear.* Let us fear to be wanting in this *faith,* let us be as averse to all self-dependance, and self-righteousness as this Centurion was, as deep in humility, as active in love, *submitting ourselves to the righteousness of*

A dungeon horrible on all sides round
As one great furnace flam'd: yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur, unconsum'd.
Such place eternal justice had prepar'd
For those rebellious, here their prison ordain'd,
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far remov'd from God, and light of Heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!

PAR. LOST. B. 59, &c.

* See Epist. to the Romans, c. xi. throughout.

God, and not going about to establish our own righteousness—and then we may have the blessed hope, that we also shall be found in the number of the true Children of God, and *shall sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.*

Such are the great instructions which we gather from this miracle wrought by our Lord in favour of this Roman Captain, who, we see "amidst all the temptations and difficulties of a military life, retained the principles not only of liberality and humanity, but of piety also:" to shew us that no state of life is incompatible with true devotion, and to hold forth a lively example, to all engaged in the like employment, of the beauty and consistency of faith and humility with their profession: his commands were not the less punctually obeyed, because he himself was obedient to the commands of God, and what might be expected from such a leader, who *sanctified the Lord of hosts himself, and made him alone his fear and his dread!* There was no danger of such religion enfeebling his mind, or inducing a pusillanimity of spirit: since such religion inspires with the only true valour, and we of this nation have not wanted proofs of real courage united with exemplary holiness! May such instances abound in our army—for then we may justly hope for success, when we go forth in *the strength of the Lord of hosts!* But alas!—(to use the words of bishop Hall)* "how can we hope that bloody hands of

§ The Bishop in this same sermon entitled, *St. Paul's Combat*, p. 446. vol. ii. of his works, observes, "let me say truly, it were an happy and hopeful thing that even our external and secular wars should be managed with pure and innocent hands: I shall tell you that which perhaps few of you have either known or considered, that of old, a *Soldier* was a *sacred* thing; and it is worth your notice, what in former times, was the manner of our ancestors in *consecrating* a soldier or knight to the war. Some six hundred years ago and upward, as I find in the history of Ingulphus,

lawless ruffians should be blessed with palms of triumph, that adulterous eyes should be shaded with garlands of victory, that profane and atheous instruments, if any such be employed in our wars, should return home loaded with success and honour? How should they prosper whose sins fight against them more than all the swords of enemies? Whose main adversary is in their own bosom and in heaven? If the God of heaven, be the Lord of hosts, do we think him so lavish, that he will grace impiety? Can we think him so in love with our persons, that he will overlook or digest our crimes? Be innocent, O ye warriors, if ye would be speedful; be devout, if ye would be victorious."—Thus this Centurion affords a very profitable example to all those, like himself engaged in the trade of war: and which, at this season especially, it may not be improper seriously to contemplate. However, the excellency of his *humility*, and the power of his

the manner was this: he that should be devoted to the trade of war, the evening before his consecration came to the bishop or priest of the place, and in much contrition and compunction of heart made a confession of all his sins: and after his absolution, spent that night in the church in watching, in prayers, in afflictive devotions; on the morrow being to hear divine service, he was to offer up his sword upon the altar, and after the gospel, the priest was with a solemn benediction to put it about his neck: then after his communicating of these sacred mysteries, he was to remain a lawful soldier. Thus he who tells us, how that valiant and successful warrior Heward, came thus to his uncle, one Brandus, the devout abbot of Peterborough, for his consecration: and that this custom continued here in England, till the irreligious Normans, by their scorns put it out of countenance: This was their ancient and laudable custom: and can we wonder to hear of noble victories achieved by them, who had so pious an initiation? These men professed to come to their combats, as David did to Goliah, *in the name of the Lord,* no marvel if they prospered. Alas now *nulta fides pietasq,* &c. ye know the rest: the name of a soldier is misconstrued by our *gallants,* as a sufficient warrant of *debauchery:* as if a *Red-coat* were a lawful cover for a profane heart: woe is me, for this sinful degeneration," &c.——He goes on as in the sermon above.

faith is not instructive to one rank of men only, but to all orders of Christians; and his character particularly in that amiable regard, which he shews for his servant, must undoubtedly raise a generous esteem in all your breasts. But, O my brethren, let it not be said, that a man should be more solicitous for the temporal welfare even of his servant, than WE for the eternal welfare of our own most precious souls!

Every sinner, every carnal man, yet unregenerate, and yet unconverted to Christ, hath this *paralytic servant at home*, a soul lying grievously sick and *ready to die*, a conscience miserably tormented and in danger of everlasting death. And will you not be solicitous, will you not be stirred up to an anxious care, that this poor servant may be cured by the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and delivered from its distress here, before it be given up to final distress and unending torment? This can be done no otherwise, than by the spirit of God through the word, working in the heart true repentance and conversion, causing the soul to embrace with full faith the death and satisfaction of Christ, whereby it is made partaker of his infinite merits, and enabled to serve him in love to its life's end. Nothing but this repentance, and this faith can avail to the cure of such a sick and disordered soul. He alone who cured the paralytic servant by a word, can raise the soul dead in sin, and give it the power to rise up and walk in newness of life. And if we have but, if we will but shew, the least desire to attain this life from the dead; if we will but sue to Christ with sincerity of soul, he is always as ready to hear and come to us, as he was to the Centurion's servant, *I will come and heal him*, said he. Nay, indeed the truth is, he hath really done for us, what he offered to do for this Centurion's servant: he came

down from heaven to heal us: "We were all sick unto death; so far had the dead palsy of sin overtaken us, that there was no life of grace left in us; when he was not content to sit still in heaven, and to say, I will heal them: but he added also, *I will come and heal* them:" *Lo, I come,* said he *(in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God:* to do thy will, to give my life a ransom for many; and he fulfilled his blessed purpose, came down to this miserable world and personally healed us! And now,—O that we could but be as lowly subjects of his goodness as we are unworthy,—now is this all-powerful Mediator ready to come upon the least motion of our heart, even now is he ready, whenever our faith can look up to him, to come and heal every disorder of our souls! Yet notwithstanding all this love, and all this goodness, notwithstanding all he hath done, and all he is mercifully inclined to do for us,—how backward are we to send one suitor to him, to put up one prayer, or to cry to him for that help, which yet, we know, he will not deny to those, who sincerely seek for it! And—oh! strange to tell, and marvellous to think—we see this Roman Captain with the utmost diligence labouring to procure health for his servant, only through fear of temporal death, and because this servant was dear and useful to him: while we, wretched and unthinking creatures, have but very little or no regard at all for a miserable soul, lying sick unto death, for a conscience, quite paralytic and ready to fall into grievous torments! The loss of eternal glory moves us but little, we are courageous enough to have no dread of that eternal, that outward darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, where is every woe without the least alleviation of comfort, and whereto this spiritual palsy if it remain uncured, will assuredly bring the soul!

Nay, so very little do we see men affected by the sight and sense hereof, that even at a time when the body itself begins to lose all its faculties, when the delights of sense are no more, when the memory fails, when the understanding is darkened, and all the powers are in decay, even then, even in hoary age, even on the bed of death, on the brink of the grave, we see men consulting for their own private ends and for temporal things; while eternity calls loud upon them to look up and behold its boundless extent; and God, with the volume opened, sits ready to try and bring them to an exact account!— O that such, and all mankind, would well consider in this their day; that they would seriously lay to heart the deep importance of a life to come: lest all their temporal labours should be found in vain, lest their neglect of spiritual things should prove a dreadful cause of future misery, of sad neglect from God, of fatal separation from him, from heaven, from blessedness for ever! O that this last and solemn account, which we must all one day make, were at all times so present in our thoughts, as to incline us to unwearied diligence in well doing, an indefatigable care to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, an unreserved obedience to all the commandments of our God, and a full reliance on the all-sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction made by the blessed Jesus, for ours and for the sins of the whole world!

And— O most adorable Lord and Saviour, thou who art the only physician of the soul, able and willing to heal, although we be utterly unworthy that thou shouldst come under our roof, yet with most humble faith we beseech thee to grant us this mercy out of thy free grace and love; we beseech thee, that thou wouldst deign to visit the house of our breasts in and by thy holy word and sacraments!

that thus every infirmity of our languishing soul being cured, we may be confirmed and strengthened in thee unto life and happiness eternal! O, speak the word, and thy servants shall be healed! O, let it be unto us according to this comfortable and sure word of thine, *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open to me, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me!* Fulfil, O Lord, this good word in all our hearts; give us the ear to hear thy divine voice, and to open unto thee, that we may so enjoy thy graces here, as fully to enjoy thy unspeakable glories hereafter! *Amen.*

DISCOURSE V.

THE PARALYTIC CURED.

PART I.

LUKE v. 18—20.

And behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy; and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

THE Evangelist introduces this Paralytic with a *Behold*, as the excellency of the miracle, and the importance of the doctrine, demand. He was burdened and heavy-laden, and so in a proper state to come to Christ, he came in faith, as all must come, who desire relief; and he found rest to his soul, even the forgiveness of his sins, which all will find, according to our Lord's promise, who, labouring and heavy-laden, *so come* unto him. The present miracle serves well to manifest this blessed truth to us, upon which I have largely expatiated in the

introductory discourse: but before I proceed to consider the improvements to be made from hence, it may not be improper to take a general view of the history, as delivered by the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Our Saviour entered again into Capernaum, and a rumour was speedily spread, that he was in the house: upon which there was such a concourse of people, as not only to fill the house where he was, but to leave no room, no possibility of entrance so much as at the door. He there preached the word of the Lord to them, many pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by to hear him, and the *power* of the Lord was present to heal those that applied to him for relief. When, behold strong in faith, and firmly persuaded of his almighty power to heal, a man sick of the palsy, deprived of all motion and capability to help himself, was brought by four men in a bed, or couch, who sought by all means possible to present this afflicted object before the eyes of Jesus: but finding it impossible to do so, on account of the great press and the surrounding multitude, they had recourse to another method found out by their active faith and zealous love. *They went upon the house-top;*—It must be remembered that the houses in the eastern countries were, nay, and at present are usually built very low, with one or two stories at most, whose roofs are always flat, to which there are generally doors, something like our trap-doors, by which to ascend from the house; since it was much the custom to spend part of the day on the top of the house, as we read of David, and of St. Peter, who was praying on the house-top, when men, sent from Cornelius, came to him: besides this we may remark, that it was very common to have a way up to the roof from the outside of the house, as well as from within, by a fixt pair of stairs or ladder, by which they could ascend from the

ground to the roof without entering into the house.* —These particulars otherwise too inconsiderable to detain us, for this reason only deserve our attention, because some modern infidels have made little objections, founded on an ignorance of these matters, wretched handles for their impious blasphemy against this mighty miracle and the divine author of it.

Most probably, by these outward stairs the friends of the Paralytic undaunted by difficulties, and not discouraged by disappointments, raised him up to the house top; *forcing open*, and uncovering the roof by pulling § out the door in it, through this opening they let down with ropes the sick of the palsy in his couch, into the midst before Jesus: who seeing *their faith*,† that of the man's and of

* For the most full and satisfactory account of the letter of this history, the reader is referred to the excellent, learned and judicious explication of it given by the bishop of Bangor, in page 26. part. iv. of the *Miracles of Jesus vindicated*. And it is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity of recommending that useful work to the reader's serious perusal.—Bishop Smallbrook's able *Vindication of the Miracles of our blessed Saviour*, vol. ii. p. 194 will serve well also to illustrate this history.

§ Εξορυξαντες, forcing or breaking it open, pulling it out; as it is most probable it was fastened within. See Gal. iv. 15.

† St. Chrysostom speaking of this act of the bearers, says, "So ingenious a thing is affection, and so fruitful in invention is love." And again upon the paralytic's patience in bearing all these difficulties and not waiting for some other opportunity.—"He said nothing of all this either to himself or his bearers, but thought it became him to make so great a number of persons as were present witnesses of his cure. But his faith was not only visible from hence, but likewise from the very words used by Christ on this occasion.—For which reason also Christ did not go out to him, but waited for the sick man to come to him, that he might have an opportunity of demonstrating the *faith* of the Paralytic to all the company, for could not he have made the admission of the Paralytic to him an easy thing? But he did nothing of that nature that he might exhibit to all the company the diligence and fervent faith of the Paralytic:"——See Bishop Smallbrook's *Vindication*, &c. p. 106. vol. ii. The Bishop is of opinion, p. 202, that this man's disorder was a παραπληγια, an *universal palsy* (which according to the acknowledgment of eminent physicians) is quickly fatal, as ending speedily in an Apoplexy. Ader is of this opinion, whose excellent treatise on the

his friends,—though they themselves spake nothing, the miserable condition of the Paralytic yet pleading with a voice far more eloquent than all speaking,—He said unto him, "*Son*, [*or Man*] be of good cheer, take courage, thy sins are forgiven thee." Certain of the scribes and pharisees, who were sitting there, upon this began to say within themselves, and to reason in their hearts, "Who is this, which speaketh blasphemies? claiming that to himself which is the property of God only? For who can forgive sins but God alone?" But, Jesus, perceiving, by that *divine Spirit*, which knoweth all things, this secret working of their thoughts,—said to them, "Why reason ye these things, wherefore think ye *evil* in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say, to the sick of the palsy, thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, arise and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power to forgive sins on earth,—then, saith he, turning himself to the sick of the palsy, *I say unto thee, arise, take up thy couch and go thy way into thine house.* And immediately this impotent Paralytic rose up before them all, took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. Insomuch that the whole multitude were astonished at the sight, were filled with fear, and gave glory to God, who had given such power unto men; saying with awful amazement to each other, "We have seen strange things to-day: we never before saw it after this fashion."

Thus Jesus manifested forth his glory: and from this stupendous display of his divine power, we learn, that temporal evils are inflicted as punishments for sin," and that, "if we desire deliverance

scripture diseases serves well to manifest the power and glory of Jesus. And if this were the case, we have another answer to the infidel's objection, Why these people were in such mighty haste to get to Jesus?

therefrom, we must apply to him who hath power to forgive us our sins, and to heal us of all our infirmities—his possession of which divine power, or, true divinity, the present history abundantly proves." These points particularly, with such others as naturally arise from the event, I propose to consider for your instruction and improvement in righteousness —and may his almighty *power be present to heal*, while thus in his courts, and under his immediate eye, we meditate upon this marvellous cure, with a single intention, I trust, to apply it to our own spiritual wants and necessities!

I. The first thing observable in this miracle, is the *zealous charity* of those, who carried the miserable Paralytic: when the multitude, so numerous was it about the door, either could not, or would not give place (as knowing the disease, under which this man laboured, to be desperate, ever deemed incurable, or at least very slow and imperfect in its cure) when no entrance could possibly be given to them, yet they were not discouraged hereby, nor weary of their labour; though they might have easily saved themselves any further trouble, and have pleaded in excuse, that there was no possibility of admission:—Such *excuses* as, in assisting the distresses of others, men for the most part not only greedily lay hold of, but carefully hunt after: On the contrary, disappointment rather quickened their zeal, and so unwearied was their labour of love, that they devised the most uncommon and fatiguing method, and with the utmost difficulty, presented through the roof of the house this paralytic, patient of every inconvenience that he might appear before the compassionate Jesus.

In them we have an example, 1st, of that love and good will, which is the most acceptable offering to Christ: and which we are bound to shew in all offices of mercy and benevolence to our fellow-

creatures, not making vain excuses, when we have it in our power, or to save ourselves from trouble, but persevering with all our might in love and in every good work, and not least in *prayer* to God, for those whose spiritual or temporal necessities we humbly present before *him*. The importunate application, lively faith, and zealous compassion of these men ought to be imitated by us, so far as the circumstances may suit. Here too, 2dly, we have a striking picture how in temptations and calamities the judgments and opinions of men and of the flesh would endeavour to exclude us utterly from an approach to Christ: Job's friends, those miserable comforters, were of this sort; and such are these described by the psalmist, who while, persuading him, *that there was no help for him in his God*, would have kept him from that God and from mercy, and have driven him to black despair: and such too, with us, are the accusations of our consciences, and the rigour of the law, which frequently interpose between the sinner and Saviour, like a black cloud between us and the sun. But in these men we see, how *faith* should make her way through every impediment, and let herself down before the face and in the sight of our only Mediator; laying open before him all her sins and all her sorrows, and thus moving him to pity, as he was moved, at the sight of this suffering Paralytic. We have not an high-priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and therefore we may *come boldly* unto the throne of grace, present our own and the wants of others before him, prescribe nothing to him, but leave it to his compassionate will, and then we need not fear, that the event will be less happy to us, than to this Paralytic: seeing the *Spirit himself helpeth our infirmities:* and because *we know not what we should pray for as we*

ought, therefore this good Spirit *maketh intercession** *for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.*

II. Jesus we are told saw *their faith*, the faith of the Paralytic himself, as well as of those, who carried him; which may be understood either of his seeing and knowing the *faith*, that was in their hearts, as God (even as he knew the thoughts of the Pharisees' hearts) for it is he *that searcheth the hearts, and the reins*, and it is with the *heart*, that man believeth unto righteousness:—or it may be, that he *saw it*, from the laborious and charitable endeavours of the men who carried, and from the patience of the Paralytic himself, which were a kind of fruits of faith, works, whereby their faith was shewn, as works are the only outward evidences of living faith. As God then, he saw the inward principle, the faith in their hearts; as man the outward manifestations of it, the faith in their works. —And we may remark, that the evangelists do not say, seeing the patience of the Paralytic, or the anxious charity of those who bore him, but *seeing their faith* ιδων ο Ιησους την πιστιν αυτων of which these were the certain fruits, as they are the only means whereby the sincerity of our faith can be made known to *man* though God *knoweth the heart*, and we learn from hence, that all our other works, our patience and labours of love, are approved and accepted in the sight of God, only as they arise from and are done in *faith:* and that faith, as thus attended

* Rom. viii. 26. υπερεντυγχανει *postulat, est advocatorum* (says Grotius) *qui clientibus defideria dictant.* So Henry, "the Spirit dictates our requests, indites our petitions, draws up our plea for us. Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts; so graciously hath God provided for the praying remnant. The Spirit, as an enlightening spirit, teacheth us what to pray for: as a sanctifying spirit works and excites praying graces; as a comforting spirit silenceth our fears and helps us over all our discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the spring of all our desires and breathings towards God.

with its fruits, is the only instrument or means whereby the benefits of Christ, and especially forgiveness of sins, are conveyed to us. His *faith* we read, was that alone which obtained for the Paralytic those gracious words, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee:* and yet his *faith* was not without patience and strong hope: so neither can we obtain remission of sins other than by *faith*, in Christ: Salvation is perfectly free: man's merits contribute nothing towards it; but unless our faith be accompanied with other graces and produce good works in us, that faith will never avail us: if it do produce good works, (which true faith ever doth as naturally and necessarily as fire produces heat) they, on account of that faith, will be well accepted of God for us.*

Some understanding the words, THEIR *faith*, of the bearers of this impotent man only, have disputed very largely how far a man may be profited by the faith and intercession of others; a favourite doctrine of the Romish church. There is no need to suppose, that the word *their* excludes the man—but expresses as well his *own* faith as *that* of *those* who carried him: And so we have no reason from hence to conclude, that any man's actual offences can be forgiven through the faith of others, without his own actual repentance, and sincere desire of forgiveness; no man's faith can avail for the absolution of another man's sins: all we have is too little for ourselves: after we have done all, we are *but unprofitable servants.*† But though our faith cannot avail for the remission of another man's sins, yet it may prevail much for the procurement of temporal blessings upon those whose cause we pre-

* See the 11, 12, and 13 Articles of our church.
† See the 14 Article of our church.

sent before the throne of grace; as well as by being made a means of bringing others to the knowledge of the word and truth of God, which may beget faith in the heart.* The faith of another will always be found serviceable and should always be used to this good purpose, and for the benefit of our neighbour; according to what St. James advises—*Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins,* (of which he now repenteth) *they shall be forgiven him, i. e.* he shall be absolved by the elders of the Church to whom Christ hath given the power of absolution. And he goes on, *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, thatye may be healed, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Thus may you make your faith happily subservient to the good of your brethren; and this you are bound to do; to pray one for another, to commend each other to Christ, and with fervent prayer effectual through its mighty energy to entreat his mercies and blessings upon yourselves and others. And you have an apostolic command for calling the *elders*, the ministers of the church, to pray over you, when in sickness and distress; *Is any sick, let him call the elders, &c.* It would be happy, if

* *Their faith*—Little children cannot go to Christ themselves, but he will have an eye to the faith of those that bring them, and it shall not be in vain. Jesus saw *their faith* his *own* as well as *theirs* who brought him, which Jesus saw the habit of, though his distemper perhaps impaired his intellectuals and obstructed the actings of it. Henry on the place. It is said Acts xiv. 9, that Paul *perceived, saw* (ἰδων) that the cripple at Lystra had *faith* to be healed; which it is agreed, was done, either by that *extraordinary spirit* of *discerning*, which St. Paul possessed, or from the apparent zeal and humility of the man as expressed by his countenance and actions, *as he heard Paul speak.*

this were more universally, or at least more *properly* done amongst us: while some, in these days, esteem it *mere fashion* to call in the *Priest*, with all his *holy trumpery*;* and others defer the important business till every hope of life is over; when the physician declares the case desperate, then the minister is to be called:—And what advantage, I would ask, do you imagine, can arise from hence? Alas, if the soul now launching into eternity, now struggling under the pains and pangs of death, hath hitherto been a stranger to God and his Christ in these gloomy, dark, and confused moments, I leave you to suppose what good can be done. This is a proceeding so prejudicial to souls, and I fear, so common, that every sincere minister cannot but with sorrow complain of it—and with earnestness warn all to avoid it. I beseech you therefore, my brethren and friends, let the sense of this danger, and of that fearful change, which, such a sinful soul, so launching into eternity, must in a moment share: let the awful sense hereof, advise and stir you up to prepare to-day, while it is called to-day, to be always in readiness against the hour when the Master shall knock; that so your soul may not be overwhelmed with black horror and dire confusion, should that hour come upon you as a thief in the night.

But to return from this, I hope not unseasonable digression.

III. Jesus seeing the faith of the Paralytic and his friends, though they came, requesting, (as it is natural to conclude) the recovery of his body only, yet like a skilful physician, he strikes at the root, and first offers *forgiveness of sins*, the recovery of

* These are the words of *some*, who are not ashamed to use them in the most public manner.

his soul. *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee:* which is a point of great importance, and still more fully opens the design of our blessed Saviour's miracles. For thus by healing the disorders of the body which are the effect and punishment of sin, defiling and disordering the senses, he first shews us, that he is the physician of the soul who came to take away sin: secondly, that diseases and calamities of whatever kind, as being the punishment,* should be the admonitors of sin to us; whence we are advised to use our most diligent and constant care for the removal of the *inward* cause, the true fountain and root of all evil, that so the benefit of our cure and deliverance may be entire, and the whole man be saved both in body and soul. And 3dly, because men at that time sought after and followed him principally for the miracles which he did and the cures which he wrought—as all men are too apt to fly to God only in troubles, and for relief from outward calamities—to prevent this, as much as possible, Jesus here admonisheth to begin, above all, with removing the cause of evil, by seeking the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, so that God may withdraw his hand from punishing us; it is true, afflictions and chastisements befall even the children of God; but they are necessary and useful to the wisest purposes; nay, and often singular

* Drusius observes upon the words *thy sins are forgiven*—"Thy sins which are the cause of thy disorder, which is now removed, thy sins being pardoned. The saying, *nisi essent peccata, non essent flagella,* if there had been no sins, there had been no scourges, is well known. The wise men amongst the Jews say, that both *sickness* and *health* happen to the soul; vices and sin are its sickness; virtue and good works its health. And a Rabbi upon the words of the Psalm *heal my soul,* observes, he doth not say, Heal my body, because his iniquity was the ground and reason of his disease, but heal my soul, for when God heals the soul of its disease, which is done by the forgiveness of sins, the body also is healed!" See *Crit. sacri.* in Matt. p. 344. tom. vi. See also the same commentator on Luke, tom. i. p. 369.

blessings;* though they have the same source and origin. So that hence we are taught in general, as all temporal evils and calamities, all diseases of the body, as well as other afflictions, nay even death itself, are the fruits and the punishment of sin; whenever they fall upon us, we should be careful in the very first place, to apply to the great Physician of our souls, for the cure of the inward evil, the cause of outward distresses; and we see that the cause removed, the sin being forgiven, the effect ceases, the immediate consequence is the deliverance from its punishment; for it is equally easy with Christ, and in such cases of the same import to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*, and *arise, take up thy bed and walk.*

We gather from the sacred scriptures, that natural evils and infirmities are sent upon men, 1st, on account of sin, as we learn from this miracle before us; 2d, to prove, try and refine us, as in the case of Job; 3d, to subdue the remains of indwelling sin, and to preserve our virtues and graces, as in the case of St. Paul, to whom a *Thorn* in the *flesh*, a bodily affliction,§ was given to humble him, *lest he should be exalted above measure;* 4th, to shew forth the glory of God in us, as in the case of the man born blind; 5th, as the beginning of eternal pun-

* As sin is the cause of sickness, so the remission of sin is the comfort of recovery from sickness; not but that sin may be pardoned, and the sickness not removed; not but that the sickness may be removed, and yet the sin not pardoned. But if we have the comfort of our reconciliation to God, with the comfort of our recovery from sickness, this makes it a mercy indeed to us, as to Hezekiah, Isai. xxxviii. 17. Henry on the place. Again he observes, the way to remove the effect is to take away the cause; pardon of sin strikes at the root of all diseases and either cures them or alters their property. On Mark ii.

§ I call this a bodily affliction, because, I think, the best Christian Writers are agreed in this interpretation. The reader, if inclined to satisfy himself, will find an useful discourse on the subject in the learned Bishop Bull's works. Vol. i. p. 183.

ishment, which was the miserable case of proud and vain-glorious Herod.* These are the only causes, which are found in scripture, why diseases, and worldly calamities are sent upon men: and they all, save the last, centre in this gracious purpose, the bringing us to a serious sense of our own manifold unworthiness, and the stirring up to a zealous application unto Christ; that so we may cast ourselves before him, confess our sinfulness, and entreat of him, the only Physician of our souls, to give us a full pardon and a blessed deliverance from all our offences. This the Paralytic obtained when Christ spoke those most comfortable words to him—*son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

In St. Luke he addresses the Paralytic with the title of MAN, *man, be of good cheer;*—and both the words *son* and *man*, are intended to shew his fatherly affection and sympathizing compassion. He calls him *son, for like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him:* he calls him *man*, for he was himself a man, himself took our nature and bore its infirmities, that being *touched* with the *feeling* of them, he might be a merciful, faithful and compassionate High-priest. The wretched, the labouring and heavy-laden, have no need to fear, if they come to Christ in faith, that they shall be rejected or unkindly received: for by these two appellations, *son* and *man*, both of which he became for man, he sufficiently shews, that he is not only touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but like a kind father anxious and desirous to remove them from his children.

He adds, *be of good cheer*, θαρσει a word of great empasis, "take courage, be of good heart, have that holy boldness, which a sure trust and confi-

* From Bede.

dence in God's mercies giveth:" it is opposed to doubting, trembling, fearing, and confusion of mind: and by it Christ intended to take away all that fear and doubt which he saw conceived in the mind of the Paralytic from the sense of his own great sinfulness, whereof, he knew from the law, that his disease was a punishment.* From whence we are taught, how graciously our Lord will confirm and strengthen the struggling, and as it were, trembling, doubting, beginnings of faith in our hearts. When we approach him, having conceived good hopes of his favour from his infinite love to worthless man, and yet in his presence are well-nigh confounded through the sense of our own vileness, let us nevertheless not be wholly discouraged: but remember, that it is his desire, that all should come to him, that he hath said to the doubting Paralytic, *son, be of good cheer*, thy *sins be forgiven thee;* and will also thus say to us, if we make an offering of all our sins before him, humbly fall down, and singly implore his compassion. For though no longer corporally present with us, yet is he still present by the same divine power which alone can forgive us our sins: and to our great and endless comfort, hath appointed a continual ministry, and given thereto the keys of absolution, that *whosoever sins they absolve, they may be absolved,* &c. which word of health you constantly hear, " he hath given power and commandment to his minis-

* Grotius upon the place, observes this—*hic morbus haud dubie causam trahebat ex ipsius hominis culpa—percellebat ipsum haud dubie facinorum graciorum conscientia,* &c. See *Criti. sacri.* on Matt. p. 346. The passage from Plato quoted here by Grotius is remarkable Ὅτι ωσπερ, &c. " As it is absurd to attempt to cure the eyes while the malady remains uncured in the head, or to cure the head, while the whole body is infected, so is it equally absurd to attempt the cure of the body, while the soul remains uncured." See Bishop Smallbrook's Vindication, &c. Vol. ii. p. 230.

ters to declare and pronounce to his people, being *penitent*, the *absolution* and *remission* of their sins."

Happy will it be for those who can find in themselves the *conditions* upon which this *absolution* is granted, who can say, "they *truly* repent and *unfeignedly* believe the holy gospel"—such may rejoice to think and know that they are absolved from all their offences, and to such—O that all who hear me this day were not only almost but altogether such!—to all such in the name and by the authority of our Master, joyfully may I apply his blessed words—*son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee!* Some may perhaps murmur hereat, and reason within themselves: as we find the Scribes and Pharisees did, when our Lord delivered these words,—*who is this, said they, that speaketh blasphemies?*—but their reasoning, and the strong demonstration which our Lord gave of his divine power and authority, convincing them, upon their own principles, that he was *God*, the true and expected Messiah, the Jehovah incarnate, with what remains of this miracle, will be considered in the next discourse.

In the mean time let us fix our attention upon that, which is the principal point in this part; namely the clear information we have from hence, that calamities are inflicted as punishments for sin, and that the only way to obtain an advantageous cure, is to go to the root, to remove the cause, which removed, the effect of consequence ceases, or if not wholly ceases, the sting at least is drawn out from the evil, and calamities of what kind soever become only fatherly chastisements, and are borne with cheerful resignation, as marks of heavenly love: *whom I love, I rebuke.* Howbeit, death, as well as all the evils, which reign in the world, were introduced by sin: and God afflicts us with these not only as punishments, but as admonitions to stir us

up to a due sense and serious examination of ourselves. Modern wisdom and human wit, may ascribe all these to *second causes*, and, as is now become the fashionable mode of reasoning, account for them, as for all things in nature, without the intervening aid of an all-wise and universal providence: but our excellent church teaches us far better, would we but as obedient children in this, as in all other her wise orders, obey her excellent counsel: she commands her ministers to put every sick person in remembrance, that "Almighty God is the *Lord* of life and death, and of *all things* to them *pertaining*, as youth, health, strength, age, weakness and sickness; wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, *know* you *certainly*, that it is God's *visitation*."—And as knowing this, were we but wise enough to descend into ourselves, when any evil of whatever sort befals us, to examine our own hearts, to begin with prayer and repentance, to apply in humble faith with all our burdens to Christ, we might then, indeed, expect success from *second causes*, and the physician's aid; while depending solely on the giver of all life and health to bless them and their endeavours to our good. God's providence is universal: and, it is but reasoning in a circle to talk of second causes in the dispensations of that providence, which acts always by means, and blesses or curses its appointed instruments to our good or evil. It is the great God, who bids the thunder roll, who bids the tempest rage: who unsheaths the sword of war, and rolls the garments of nations in blood: who permits the pestilence to stalk over a guilty land, and to destroy both man and beast: who causeth the bowels of the earth to feel strong convulsions, and suffereth fire and lightning to consume the dwellings of men. All these are second causes, which yet we acknowledge as under the governance and direction of

Almighty God, by humbly supplicating him to *deliver us from** their evil: and, which, as his ministers, he ordereth to go forth to advise men of sin, of the sins of nations, as well as of our own particular offences, and of the need of general as well as particular humiliation.—If an atheist be one who denies the being of a God; such surely are practical atheists, atheists of the worst sort, who dethrone the dread Ruler of heaven and earth, and set up second causes in his place, like the heathens of old, who worshiped the sun and the heavens above the Maker of them, the *creature above the Creator:* instead of searching into the causes when events are past, such *wise men* would do well in their wisdom to warn us of the evil about to arise from second causes, and to shew us the means of avoiding it: but when a city is swallowed up by an earthquake, or a nation depopulated by a pestilence, it is but cold comfort to assign and adjust the natural causes, and to philosophize upon the constituent inflammatory particles, which occasioned so violent commotion in the bowels of the earth, &c. Away therefore with all such minute philosophers: away with all those, that would lead us from the sight and fear of the great Jehovah: behold he sitteth in the heavens over all, and sendeth forth his voice, yea, and that a mighty voice: power and majesty are before him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat.—Yet awful in power and majesty as he is, he is clothed also with love and mercy to allure and invite us to him. And, so unspeakably great as his love is towards us, such knowledge as we have of his compassionate regard for us, and tender care over us, what can hinder us from thus coming to him, what can discourage us in our resolutions to apply to this beneficent Jesus,

* See the litany of our church.

who is thus ready and willing to heal and release, to restore and heal? See, with what infinite compassion, he received, he accosted, and he blest this *Paralytic*, who had not motives in any degree equal to ours, to stir up his faith, and to animate him in his approach to the Redeemer! He,—who knew not, that this divine Lord left his Father's bosom, and came into the world solely to save sinners:—he who knew not, that he died upon the cross for the sins of men, and rose again for their justification:—he who knew not, that all power in heaven and earth was given him, that the human nature in Christ was so exalted to the right hand of the Father, that with it and through it, as our King, Priest, and Head, he is willing to restore, save and glorify our wretched and corrupt nature:—he who knew not that in compassion to his people, he had assigned to his ministry upon earth the power of absolution, and promised to be and work efficaciously with and by this ministry, even unto the end of the world.—He who had not the knowledge of these great and blessed truths, to confirm and strengthen his faith, yet was brought with all his infirmities to the Sovereign Restorer of fallen human nature; yet was presented, miserable son of affliction, to the compassionate regard of the adorable Jesus, and see, what glorious fruits crowned this his application!

He is always the same Lord, equally willing to hear, equally able to save: and, according to his sure promise, *always present* in his word and sacraments to bless those who come to him. Fail not therefore, my beloved brethren, as ever you desire to experience his love and favour, fail not to approach yon hallowed table spread with the sacred symbols of his divine body and blood, and where he is set forth before your eyes as crucified afresh: O fail not there to present yourselves before him, with

all your sins and all your sorrows: there cast yourselves at the footstool of his mercy, there humbly offer up yourselves wretched, weak, impotent *Paralytics*, unable of yourselves to help yourselves, and with groanings that cannot be uttered in silent humiliation, expect the mercies of his healing power; fear not then, but if thus you present unto him a sin-sick soul, if thus you plead his one-sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction,—fear not, but he will shew his wonted compassion, bid you be of good cheer, release you from all your sins, and enable you to walk and to glorify him.

But expect not these blessings, if you apply not to him for them in *faith*, by and through these means which he hath ordained, and particularly the blessed communion: And say, can you profess yourselves followers and servants of this Master; can you in his church confess yourselves miserable sinners, and there implore his pardon and grace: can you bear his name, ye *Christians*, ye anointed of the Lord; can you recollect that his bleeding cross was marked upon your foreheads in your happy infant days; can you still acknowledge in your daily prayers, your constant want of his grace, your spiritual palsy, and utter incapacity to any thing that is good,—word, thought, or work; can you reflect on these things, *men* and brethren, and still absent yourselves from that feast, that means of grace and spiritual strength, whereto ye have been so often invited, which ye have so often refused to attend, and which, you well know, if you continue to refuse, you can have no life in you, you can have no strength, you can have no grace,—you can have no love for that suffering Jesus, who when overwhelmed with the burden of your sins, when exceeding sorrowful, sorrowful even unto death, on that last night which he spent on earth, thus tenderly and earnestly requested you all, left

this as his last and dying command—*Do* THIS *in remembrance of* ME! If this word of such a Lord, and such a Saviour, who hath the keys of death as well as life, who can destroy in hell, as well as save in heaven, if this can have no effect upon you, cannot persuade you to leave sin, to forsake the love of the world, and to come with humble faith and repentance, acknowledging yourselves less than the least of all his mercies,—certain I am, no words of mine can in the least prevail: but I will not cease to entreat our compassionate High-priest on your behalf: O may he hear and grant my petitions: and make his own words effectual to your happy remembrance of him here, that so you may be all remembered of him, when he cometh in his glory, &c.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE PARALYTIC CURED.

PART II.

LUKE v. 21.

And the Scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?

THE two principal doctrines, which we gather from this great miracle wrought by our Lord, are,

I. That all natural evils, of whatever sort or kind, are the effects and punishments of sin; and,

II. That Christ is the divine Lord and Saviour, able to forgive sin, and so to remove its punishments, as he abundantly proved himself by the present instance, which I come now, in order to consider.

The captious Scribes and Pharisees, who like too many modern hearers, sat to hear our Lord with no intent to receive his divine word into their hearts, and to take his easy yoke upon them,—but merely to find some occasion of blame and censure, and to lay such hold of his words, that they might if

possible bring him into judgment and condemnation:—They, upon our Lord's saying to the Paralytic, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee*—thought they had got a proper handle: and though they dared not speak openly before him, what they wickedly thought in their hearts: yet we are told that they began to reason and say within themselves,—*this man blasphemeth,—who is this which speaketh blasphemies?*—And as blasphemy was a capital crime, they knew if they could once adjudge and condemn him of this, there was no need of any further witness to remove so hated a guest from amongst them.

And their reasoning was just, but their conclusion and application evidently false, not to say impious; *who can forgive sins*, said they, *but God alone?* This was and is the allowed and undoubted privilege of the deity alone—μονε τε ΘΕΟΥ.—And we never read of its being communicated to any man. Herein they had the authority of the scripture on their side: *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.—In those days and in that time*, (saith the Lord) *the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I* will pardon *them whom* I reserve. *I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Saviour. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.** And as forgiveness of sins is thus the undoubted prerogative of God, they reasoned right, when they said, *who can forgive sins but God alone?* but they erred grievously in their application, *this man*

* Isai. xlii. 25. Jer. l. 20. Isai. xliii. 11. Psal. xxxii. 2. Grotius on the place thinks, that a more immediate reference was made by the Pharisees to that passage, in Job. xiv. 4. Which the Chaldee Paraphrase thus expounds, *Who can make him clean, that is defiled with sins, except God, who alone is able to forgive sins?*

speaketh blasphemies: not considering that this was the distinguishing and allowed characteristic of their Messiah, whom God anointed to be the Saviour of his people, whom they expected to save them from their sins, and bring redemption to his Israel; and whom they should have concluded this same Jesus to have been, who thus not only claimed, but proved to a sensible demonstration, that he *really had power to forgive sins?*

But instead of this they charged him with *blasphemy, who is this that blasphemeth,* said they; and here you see the depth of their malice; for blasphemy was a capital crime, and you may remember, that therefore the high-priest and the people adjudged our Saviour to be guilty of death: *Then the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, he hath spoken* blasphemy, *what farther need have we of witnesses? Behold now ye have heard his* blasphemy: *What think ye? They answered, he is guilty of death.* There are three sorts of blasphemy—three ways whereby the *fame* and *honour* of the great God is *injured*;* 1st. When any thing is attributed to God, which is unworthy of him, and derogates from his majesty. 2d. When any thing is denied to him, which is worthy of and belongs to him. And 3d. When any one attributes to himself or another, that which is the pecular and incommunicable property of God. This last is the blasphemy wherewith the Scribes and Pharisees here, (as the high-priest and the people in the passage above) charged our Saviour: as claiming and attributing to himself an allowed incommunicable privilege of the deity, namely *forgiveness of sins.*

Thus stands the accusation of the Scribes and Pharisees against our Lord; and because it was and is the proper and peculiar office of Christ, nay,

* Βλασφημια.

the very intent of his coming into the world, to *take away* and *forgive* the sins of men, the Lamb of God ordained from the beginning to that very purpose—the holy Jesus so called, because he should save his people from their sins; therefore for our comfort and establishment in this most important article of our faith, and for the conviction of those Scribes and Pharisees, and all future captious infidels, he fully demonstrates in the sequel, that he hath the power to *forgive sins* on earth, and that it is blasphemy of the highest sort to deny him this power.

It is our wisdom and duty to attend carefully to his divine words and acts lest we rob him of this privilege, wherein he rejoiceth, and so commit blasphemy against him in a matter of the nearest consequence to our own souls. The following arguments are sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind, of the true divinity of Christ, of his really possessing those attributes of the *deity*, which are incommunicable; and yet with sorrow we see numbers, not only privately, but publicly from the press, declaring their disbelief of his divinity, and so necessarily, of his power to forgive sins—*for who can forgive sins but God alone?* and thus of consequence *heaping up to themselves damnation?* For if *Christ* be not *God*, he cannot forgive sins: and if HE cannot forgive us our sins, (as we are all sinners, and want forgiveness, without which we cannot be reconciled to God,)—we must die, eternally die in them: for infallible truth assures us, that there is no other Saviour, and no other possible salvation, than that which he offers!—But, blessed be his adorable goodness, he hath given us sufficient proof, abundant evidence, that he is the *God*, able and willing to pardon! For,

I. When the Pharisees said and reasoned thus,

within themselves, and in *their own hearts*, that Jesus ought not to claim to himself this divine property of forgiving sins; he does not wait, you observe, till they openly vent their thoughts, but immediately *perceiving in his spirit*,* as St. Mark emphatically expresseth it, that they so reasoned within themselves—he said unto them, why reason ye these things *in your hearts?* And as to this too is the property and attribute of the deity only to see and know the very thoughts and intents of the heart—*For thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men*, saith Solomon;‡ and it is God alone that *searcheth the hearts and the reins.*—As this too was another of the undoubted and incommunicable privileges of God, when Jesus thus openly declared to the Pharisees, what they thought in the secret and most inmost recesses of their souls; it was natural for them to have concluded from hence, that the same divine power which could see and search into the heart, must be able also to forgive sins. And therefore, that it could be no blasphemy in him to claim to himself the power of *forgiving sins*, who manifestly shewed himself to be God, by perceiving the thoughts of their hearts, which upon the testimony of their own scriptures and experience no mere man could do: And this is such an evidence of the divinity of Christ, as, one would conceive, not very easy to be disputed or gainsayed.

* Τω πνευματι αυτω, *his divine nature*, Θεια εν χριζω φυσις, as Grotius abundantly proves in his very learned and useful note on this place, which see.

‡ 2 Chron vi. 30. 1 Kings, xvi. 7. The Greek Epigram in the *Anthologia* is very pleasing upon this subject,

Ανθρωπες μεν ισως λησεις ατοπον τι ποιησας,
Ου λησεις δε Θεον ουδε λογιζομενος.

Your *actions* may be hid from human eyes
Your very *thoughts* the deity descries.

II. In St. Matthew he declares them to be *wicked* and *impious* thoughts that even suspect Christ not to have this *power of forgiveness*. Wherefore think ye *evil*,* in your hearts? much more then must we, and ought they, to have concluded, that he is possessed of this divine power, which it were an evil, an *impious* thing even to think or to suspect him not possessed of, But,

III. He confirms and fully proves, that he had his power by the miracle which he wrought, restoring full and perfect health by a word only to a Paralytic otherwise incurable. The method of his reasoning, and the consequences which he draws, deserve attention: *Whether*, said he, *is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee*, or *to say, arise and walk*,—" Which do you, Pharisees, think the easier of these *two?* Neither of them in truth is *easy*,‖ each above all *human*, and to be performed only by *divine* power, of which I, the Son of man, amposessed in my own right; and therefore both are equally easy to me, *who can speak, and it shall be*

* Πονηρα.

‖ St. Chrysostom and St. Austin both observe, " that first, it was more difficult to forgive sins, than to cure a paralytic; yea, than to create the heavens and the earth; because the sinner as being the enemy of God, is more distant, at a greater remove from God than the earth or nothing; *magis distat a Deo, quam morbus, aut nihil.* And, 2dly, because forgiveness of sins is of an higher order than nature or natural powers, for it belongs to the order of grace, and brings that with it, but grace is the highest participation of the divinity, &c." Eusebius Gallicanus, as quoted and translated by Bishop Smallbrook, *Vindication*, vol. ii. p. 249, observes, ' whether is *easier*, &c. each of them is very *easy*, i. e. to God, but to forgive sins, or to supply strength to the paralytic for rising and walking, is a difficult work. But because the one was invisible, and the other visible, he proves that which was invisible by what was visible, that whilst they see him exercise power upon the body, they may be assured of his power over the soul."

done, who can command and it shall stand fast. You perhaps may think it more *easy* to *say, thy sins are forgiven thee*—not because, upon your own concessions, it requires less power to forgive sins than to heal the sick of the palsy; but because the effect of those words is unseen, and uncertain, so that it cannot be made manifest to the outward senses, whether they have any real efficacy or not. That therefore you may have an outward and sensible proof, that I do not falsely, arrogantly and blasphemously claim to myself the power of *forgiving sins*, but am really possessed of this divine prerogative—*that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins*—behold, I will convince your senses, of the efficacy of my words, "Thou, O Paralytic, at my command, *arise, take up thy bed and walk.*" And now that he, immediately rising up before you, gives you thus the most undeniable evidence, that I do not falsely arrogate to myself the power of healing; therefore you ought not to doubt, or to judge me blasphemous, when I say, *thy sins are forgiven*, seeing the same word or the same power, though exercised on different subjects, must have the same efficacy; from this outward sign, rather should you be convinced, that I truly have, as I profess, the power to forgive sins, though that, as being internal, is invisible and not obvious to the outward senses; and that my *word*, by which I promise and confer remission of sins, hath as certain and prevailing an effect, as when I say, *rise up, and walk.* As the one, which you must confess an act of divine power, is manifest to your senses, so should you conclude, that the same divine power will accompany the same divine word to the forgiveness of sins, though that as a spiritual act cannot come under the sight and cognizance of sense,* but of faith.

* *Homo corporeis oculis,* (says St. Cyrill,) *non cernit an peccata*

Such is the force of our Saviour's reasoning and conclusions which naturally follow his words: So that from hence he abundantly shews, that he, the Son of man, the Messiah, for the *Son of man* was a known and acknowledged title of the Messiah,—that he who in his humiliation was found even as another man, has the power to forgive sins, in his own *right*, and by his own authority—(*that the Son of man hath, I say*, &c.) not as a minister or servant, but as the Son, the Mediator and Lord. He himself as a further confirmation hereof, gave it in commission to his apostles, and their successors, that they should *forgive sins, whosesoever sins ye forgive, &c.* this they were to do as acting under his sovereign rule, as ministers, witnesses and servants, and forgiving only in the *person of Christ*,† who hath all *power* to forgive and pardon: a power which he hath *merited*, by his full satisfaction for sin on the cross: which as Mediator, he hath received from the *Father*, *for the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, and power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life*:‡ and which he possesses inherently, as being God, the very and true God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three Persons but *one God*, which the present miracle abundantly proves him to be, from the Pharisees' own concession. For none but *God alone*,

dimissa sunt. A man does not see with corporeal sight whether sins are forgiven or not. Bishop Smallbrook from St. Chrysostom, observes that this miracle is really one of the greatest in all its circumstances that was performed by Jesus; for here are several miracles in one; namely Jesus's forgiveness of the sins of the Paralytic, as acknowledged to be performable by God alone; his knowledge of the most *secret* thoughts of his audience: his instantaneous restoring to perfect health and vigour the *Paralytic*; which was an unanswerable proof of the effectual though invisible forgiveness of his sins, &c. See *Vindication*, vol. ii. p. 237.

† 2 Cor. ii. 10. ‡ John v. 22. and xvii. 2.

nothing less than the DEITY could forgive sins, Jesus did forgive sins, as removing its punishment shewed even to a sensible demonstration; therefore JESUS was and is the very and true GOD.

And as he is thus the *God* who only hath power to forgive sins, O let us take especial heed, that we apply to him in the behalf of our own souls, whose they are and to whom they belong, for he hath redeemed them by his own blood—*he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him, which died for them, and rose again.** If we reject this dying, bleeding and glorified Saviour, let us tremble to think, that *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour* all such unbelieving *adversaries* of his Cross and Passion:‡ And if we pretend to believe, and do not dedicate ourselves, to his love and service, but *live to ourselves*, and *not unto him*, we are in no less danger, for he came to save us by redeeming us *from* our sins, not by redeeming us *in* them.

The Paralytic before he obtained this blessing of forgiveness of sins and soundness of body, was brought to Christ, and presented with all his miseries before him, as an object worthy of his compassion. Had not this been done, he would not have received these blessings; so neither, be assured, can you ever receive pardon and spiritual health from him, who alone is able to forgive and comfort, unless true faith bring you unto him with all your sins and all your sorrows, and cause you to wait for his pardoning grace and healing hand, in those means which he himself hath ordained, as instruments to convey this grace and health to our souls.

* 2 Cor. v. 15 ‡ Heb. x. 26.

Soon as forgiven and restored, the Paralytic you see demonstrated the reality of the cure, and the gratefulness of his mind. *He arose up before them, took up that whereon he lay, went forth before them all,* that they might all see there was perfect soundness restored to him, and with his couch on his shoulders, *departed to his own house,* that not only those who were present, but the whole city likewise might be witnesses of this great miracle, which he failed not to spread abroad, publicly and openly *glorifying God,* who had done so great things both for the cure of his body and the salvation of his soul.—So thou, O man, when upon thy sincere application to Christ, *He shall forgive thee all thy sins, and heal all thine infirmities,* fail not to walk in his ways, to arise from thy bed of sin, to leave thy former iniquities; and to shew, by thy life of love and gratitude, the sense thou hast of the inestimable blessings conferred upon thee by thy redeeming God, thus delivering thee from the dead state of sin, and its sure wages, death eternal! thus enabling thee to live a new life unto him, to shew forth his praise by a life of obedience and thankfulness, which others beholding may be filled with an *holy* and *godly* fear, and be led to *glorify thy Father which is in heaven.*

Such was the consequence of the miracle to the people who were at that time eye-witnesses of it; *They were all amazed and said, we have seen strange things to-day—we never saw it on this fashion.*— And reason good there was for admiration, to see him, who but now, fixed upon a bed like a dead carcass, was carried by four, and to whom this crowd refused an entrance to Christ, as judging his case desperate, his disease incurable —to see *him* arise from this bed, and with so much strength and agility as to be able himself to carry it, to see him with this on his shoulders walk forth amongst them, and depart,

glorifying the great God, to his own house! No wonder they were amazed at this sight. They were *filled with fear* also, an awful reverential fear of him who had performed this stupendous work; a fear lest they should speak or think unworthily of the person, doctrines, and mighty deeds of Christ, whom they could not but esteem, in the lowest view, a great prophet indeed risen up amongst them. And being thus filled with awful fear, *they gave glory to the God of heaven*, they *glorified God;* attributing glory, and honour, and praise unto him, who had given such power of healing bodily evils, and of forgiving sins unto *men*,* that is, to the human nature in Christ, who now appeared as a man amongst them. For they did not then sufficiently and truly understand the person of Christ, *that great mystery of godliness*, namely, that he was God manifest in the flesh, and that the power and authority of pardoning sins was given to him the true Messiah and only Mediator; they did not through the veil of flesh, see the divinity dwelling within, *his glory*. But this was the beginning of faith and a desirable step to more complete knowledge, therefore Christ did not quench the smoking flax, but kindled it, and shewed himself well pleased with these beginnings of faith in those, who thus amazed, were filled with holy fear, and glorified God in him.

But how much more doth it behove us to *glorify God*, who have so full a knowledge of these divine truths, who know that all power in heaven and earth is given to this exalted and glorified Saviour, and that unless he blot out our misdeeds, they must remain for ever to bear testimony against us,—

* The learned Cocceius is of opinion, that *men* here refers to the *men* cured by Jesus, *given such power to men*, that is, of receiving remission of sins and bodily health. But the interpretation I have followed seems far preferable.

since it is he alone who blotteth out our trespasses, who taketh away that dreadful hand-writing, which is against us! And O, that under a due sense hereof, all of you who have now heard the history of this wonderful miracle wrought by the Son of man, this indisputable proof which he hath given you, of his all-sufficiency to save and to heal: O that like those who saw it, you would seriously lay it to heart, that so you might be filled with holy admiration and godly fear; that you might so bring it home to your own souls, as to have everlasting cause to glorify God on behalf of this Paralytic! For to you is this word of salvation sent; for you was this cure upon the sick of the palsy wrought; to you are these comfortable words addressed, would you but listen to them with the ears of faith, "*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee*—the work is done for thee, the ransom is paid, the debt is discharged, the Lamb of God is slain, all is ready if thou wilt but approach, ask and receive with humble *penitence* and steadfast faith—thy soul sick of the palsy shall then be cured, thy faculties shall all be restored, and thou, through almighty grace, shalt be enabled, to arise, to walk and glorify God."

But who hath believed our report?—who are disposed to turn their eyes inwards, and to contemplate their souls, thus lying sick of the palsy, thus dead to every good work, thus disabled in every faculty?—They are not sick, and therefore have no need of a physician; this, like the cross to the Greeks, is mere foolishness to them: this like Paul's divine wisdom to Festus, is the very depth of madness. But, sinner, of whatsoever rank or degree, age or sex thou art, high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, father or mother, youth or child, this be assured, this is a lively representation of thy soul, while lying in sin, while unredeemed by the saving

power of Jesus Christ. In the palsy of the body through the prevalence of evil and noxious humours, there is a general relaxation of all the nerves, by means whereof the members are rendered in a manner dead, or at least, disabled from discharging any of their proper functions: in the palsy of the soul, through the mighty and inbred power of that original corruption, that drop of hellish poison, which infused by the infernal serpent, hath tainted all human nature, the faculties are so depraved, and corrupted that the soul is incapable of exerting itself in any operations of the spiritual and divine life, but fixed as it were, to its bed, by a will prone to evil and concupiscence, *it is dead, while it liveth*, dead in trespasses and sins. And till it feels its misery, sees its wretchedness, and is sensible of its danger, such a soul will never put forth one longing wish to come to Christ: soon, as by God's grace, its wants are discerned, the sinfulness of sin seen in the pure glass of God's most holy law, and the wages of it discovered in its satisfaction and punishment, then through all the oppositions of satan, the scandals of the world, the judgments of the flesh, it will labour to be brought to Christ, to lay all its sins and all its sorrows, with true remorse, open before him, and will count every thing but loss, so be it may win the love and gain the favour and forgiveness of this divine Redeemer! And when thus awakened by his word, seen in its spiritual extent and force, when thus brought by true faith and repentance, conceived from that same word by the power of the convincing Spirit, into the presence of Jesus, to those holy ordinances which he hath ordained, and where he hath promised ever to be present.—He will grant unto the longing soul free remission of all its offences, he will abundantly pardon: "For he pardoneth and absolveth all them, that *truly* REPENT and *unfeign-*

edly BELIEVE his holy gospel."* And as an earnest and evidence § hereof to the soul, he will renew its corrupted and depraved nature by his divine Spirit, giving it new and spiritual faculties, that so it may no longer, weak and impotent to every good work, lie in the bed of sin; but arise, get the dominion over it, yield its members as instruments of righteousness unto God, and walk in all his holy commandments, glorifying him by a life dedicated to his honour, and a heart ever glowing with his love, which, &c.

* The reader versed in the writings of the Fathers will soon discern that a reference is made all through the above to their spiritual exposition of this miracle, while care hath been taken to avoid some seeming absurdities, which the recommendation of a Woolston have rendered more suspicious. St. Austin explains the *uncovering of the Roof of the* house to give the Paralytic an entrance to Jesus, *by opening the hidden* things of Scripture, unveiling the mysteries, *tecta, id est, operta scripturarum operiat, &c.* Of the four bearers of the Paralytic, &c. Theophylact upon Mark, treats thus, "I am paralytical since the powers of my soul are without motion or operation towards any thing that is good; but if I shall be carried by the *four Evangelists,* and brought by them to our Lord, then shall I hear him say, *thy sins are forgiven thee.*" St. Gregory in his 23d Book of *Morals,* says, What is meant, by the *Bed,* in these words of our Lord, *take up thy bed and walk,* but the *lust of the flesh?* He is now commanded, when whole, to carry that, where he lay when infirm. For every one who yet is pleased with carnal delights, lieth sick in the lust of the flesh; but being healed, he carrieth that where he lay, because being delivered from his vices, by the divine assistance, he afterwards bears the reproaches and contumelies of the same flesh, in the desires of which he formerly rested." The reader desirous of seeing more on this subject may consult St. Austin's Evangelical Questions, lib. ii. chap. 4. and serm. 46.

§ Concerning the evidences of remission, I shall have occasion to speak more fully in a subsequent sermon on the *Thankful Penitent.*

DISCOURSE VII.

THE WIDOW'S SON OF NAIN.

LUKE vii. 12.

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only Son of his Mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her.

HOW wonderful are the dispensations of God's providence towards his children—how little cause have we of despair and distrust even in the blackest night of affliction? Who would not have imagined, that God had indeed *forgotten to be gracious, and in anger shut up his tender mercies* from this poor widow, suffering under the heaviest load, and travelling beneath the most oppressive burden of distress? deprived of her Son, of her *only* Son, of her Son in the flower of his youth,* when now he might have repaid his mother's toils, and been to her in the place of a husband,—of that husband,

* *Her only son*—Store is some mitigation of loss; amongst many children one may be more easily missed; for still we hope the surviving may supply the comforts of the dead; but when all our hopes, and joys must either live or die in one, the loss of that one admits of no consolation. *Flower of his youth*—Our decrepit age both expects death and solicits it, but vigorous youth looks strangely upon that grim serjeant of God; Bishop Hall. See Zachariah xii. 10. and Jer. vi. 26.

whom she had long since lost, and, miserable deserted widow, whose loss was supportable only through the comfort of this child, the surviving image of his departed father, the balm of all her grief, the hope of her afflicted soul! Who now shall give consolation to this solitary widow; to this lonely parent, bereaved of her husband, deprived of her child, what misery can be more complicated, how can she do other, than *refuse to be comforted*, than *go down mourning into the grave* and house of death unto her husband and her son!

And the melancholy funeral was now with slow and solemn pomp moving towards that house and grave; struck with her deep distress and pitying the sad case of this unfortunate widow, much people of the city, many of her weeping neighbours attended, sympathising with her in this great affliction, and touched with kind compassion, on account of her truly deplorable circumstances. But little relief were they able to afford; commiseration, though grateful to the oppressed soul, can neither restore the husband nor the son; submission and patience are, in death, the only lessons which the comforter can preach or the afflicted learn.

But though man was unable to relieve, yet there was and is a power able and willing to save and relieve to the uttermost; happy for this widow, our divine Redeemer having manifested the power of his word upon the servant of the Centurion at Capernaum, returning from thence directed his way to this little city of Nain: a large company of people attended him, not for state, but for the more evidence of the work;* and his wise providence so or-

* Henry upon the place observes, "this miracle is as well attested as can be, for it was done in the sight of two crowds, that met in or near the gate of the city. There was a crowd of disciples and other people attending Christ, and a crowd of relations and neighbours attending the funeral of the young man. Thus

dered his journey, that at the very gate of the city,† behold—he meets this mournful funeral, *this dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.* "And now when she gave up herself for a forlorn mourner, past all capacity of redress, the God of comfort meets her, pities, relieves her: here was no solicitor but his own compassion, *when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her:* In other occasions he was sought and sued to, the Centurion comes to him for a servant, the Leper for himself, and the neighbours for the Paralytic :‡ Here he seeks up the patient, and offers the cure unrequested; when we have to do with the Father of mercies, our afflictions are the most powerful suitors, no tears, no prayers can move him, so much as his own

there was a sufficient number to attest the truth of this miracle, for it was a greater proof of Christ's authority, than his healing of diseases; for by no power of nature, or any means can the dead be raised."

† It must be remembered, that the Jewish sepulchres, or burying places, were all without the city. See Matthew xxvii. 60, and not only the Jewish, but those of other nations also, whence as Grotius observes comes the expression, *efferendi*, of carrying out. "And certainly, as he well observes, a regard to the public health requires this, which is much injured by the stench exhaling from places of burial; whence it is to be admired that almost all *Christians* have agreed to have their churches and places of burial together: a custom first introduced in honour of the martyrs, but whether retained wisely or not, I will not determine." See *Crit. Sacr.* p. 415. on Luke. A learned and ingenious pamphlet, was some time since printed on this subject entitled, "*Seasonable Considerations* on the *indecent* and *dangerous* custom of burying in Churches and Church-yards, &c. Printed in 1721, for Bettesworth, in Paternoster-Row.

‡ The antients observe, says Grotius, that in three of the miracles performed by Jesus after his sermon on the mount, the three kinds of God's benefits are represented to us; first, of those which are conferred upon our suing to God for them ourselves, as in the case of the Leper: secondly, of those which are obtained for us by the prayers of others, as in the case of the Centurion's servant,—and the third, of those, which God bestows out of his own free mercy, without any prayers of ours, as in the present case. To which kind of mercy, the apostles very justly refer the calling of the Gentiles.

commiseration."* *Weep not*, said he;—Alas, that had been but in vain to bid her not weep, who had thus lost her only Son; that had been but to persuade her to be miserable and not to feel it; wherefore he accompanies his word of mercy with power; *he came and touched the bier;* he stopped the pomp of the funeral, *they that bare* the corpse, in obedience and expectation of some mighty deed, *stood still:* and with that glorious voice, which shall one day call our dead bodies from their graves, he said, *Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise.* That word was never without effect, *he spake and it was done.* he called with authority, immediately *he that was dead*, sat up, *and began to speak;* when the compassionate Jesus || restored her only son, to this late afflicted, now astonished and rejoicing mother, *who was not a little comforted.* § A holy and an awful fear fell upon all them, who heard and saw this marvellous act, and they glorified God, saying, *That the great prophet*, † *is risen up amongst us*, the great prophet of whom there was now a general expectation, and of whom Moses spake, saying, *a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things;* and that *God had now visited this people*, by sending this expected prophet, whom they acknowledge in the person of Jesus, the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

Outward miracles strike many: all have eyes to see when a dead body is raised up again to life and motion. But few look to the inward work, and observe the same miracle when manifested in the resurrection of a soul from sin: and yet to these

* Bishop Hall.

|| Απεδωκεν, English Manuscript.

§ Acts xx. 12.

† Οτι προφητης μεγας εγηγερται—*the great prophet* foretold, and now expected. See John vi. 14, and the following sermon on Christ's feeding the multitude.

spiritual cures all the corporeal deliverances wrought by Christ should direct our mind's eye. "Men, saith Austin beautifully, have not eyes wherewith to see the resurrection of the dead in soul, unless they themselves have had part in that resurrection: For that the dead (dead in soul) are even now raised up, no man that is a Christian can doubt. And yet it is more to raise up a soul, to raise up that which shall live for ever, than a body, that which must surely die again; this widowed mother rejoiced over her son raised from the dead; our mother the church rejoiceth over her sons, raised up from the death in spirit; he was dead in body, but these are dead in soul; his visible death was lamented with great sorrow: their invisible death is neither seen nor lamented: he alone who raised the one can raise the other; to whom none are dead, but asleep only; and who can as easily raise a man from his grave, as we can awaken one sleeping on his bed, &c."§ And as all the miracles of our Lord were wrought not solely as proofs of his power, but as means to convey instruction to mankind, and plainly to discover, that his main errand into the world was to cure the diseases of the soul; so it is our duty and happiness thus to consider them in in reference to ourselves; || in which view we learn

§ See this Father's sermon *de tribus mortuis*. Tom. x. p. 65. of his works.

|| Paul the Apostle, writing to the Romans, saith, "what things soever are written, are written for our instruction; that through patience and comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. Wherefore when we read this most sweet Gospel, let us know that it pertaineth not only to the widow of Nain, but also to all mankind. For Christ in this gospel beareth witness of the power of his own Godhead; of his pitifulness towards them that be in distress; and of his office. For, first, the Lord proveth himself to be almighty, in that he overmastereth death, which is the sting of sin. 2d, He uttereth his pitifulness towards us, in having compassion upon this woman's misery: and, 3d, he sheweth

principally from the great event before us, "that as all are dead in sin, so it is the word and power of Christ alone which can raise us up from this death; in which first resurrection if we now have part, that same divine word, and power, shall also raise us up hereafter to a participation of the second resurrection." *For blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power.* The word of Christ is the great means, whereby this wonderful work must be wrought upon us, whereby we *must be begotten again to a lively hope,*‡ in *Christ Jesus,* and without which we can never live to God. Let us therefore in humble dependance upon that bleessed Spirit, *who is the Lord and giver of life,* who alone can make the word effectual to the resurrection of the soul, consider the doctrines which arise from this miracle, that we may apply them in sincerity to our own hearts.

Some have conceived that in this widow, deprived of the husband of her youth, and mourning for her only son deceased, we have a picture of the soul, whose first husband is the law, and whose children are all those duties performed in that servile state. To this law sinners must die, ere they can be married to Christ, agreeable to what St. Paul speaks, *wherefore, my brethren, ye are also became dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God.* We must be *Widows* to this law, and have all our duties and dependancies upon the flesh dead, before we can come to Christ: and when thus

that it is his office to destroy the works of the devil, for unto that purpose came he into the world, as Moses, the prophets, he himself, and the apostles testify." *Heminge's Postil* p. 232.

* 1 Pet. i. 3. James i. 18. of his own will *begat* he us, with the WORD of *Truth.*

coming, he will have compassion on and give new life to the soul, spiritual life and power to perform all duties acceptably—to *bring forth new fruit unto God.* Be this exposition as it may, which I undertake not to defend or refute; we learn however many other instructive lessons from the miracle. And,

I. We have here an example of the truth of our Saviour's words—*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,* not *blessed* merely because they *mourn,* many, too many mourn through worldly misery, who neither are blessed nor spiritually comforted: but because worldly sorrow and mourning for the most part humble the soul, cause us to look into ourselves, to see our sins as the reason of our sorrows, and so to turn to God, for those offences, which thus separate between him and us: they that thus *mourn,* "grieving for sin more than suffering, and for suffering only for sin's sake,"—they shall be certainly blessed and comforted. This Widow proved the blessedness of mourning. Her grief as we have seen was the deepest and most complicated, possible; her night of affliction without the least ray of light; in a state of widowhood, the most miserable and distressed of all others, and which we find in Scripture deplored as the greatest misery, and threatened as the greatest punishment: *We are orphans, and fatherless, our mothers are as Widows. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a Widow.** And for this reason, the God of consolation sweetens and sooths their affliction with many refreshing promises. For he calls himself the *judge and the reliever of the Widow—the Father of the fatherless.*† He commends the cause of the widow to the magistrate and others, as under a singular

* Lament. v. 3. and Psal. cix. 9.
† Psal. lxviii. 5. cxlvi. 9, &c.

privilege—*Ye shall not afflict any Widow or fatherless child, if thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be Widows, and your children fatherless.* He commandeth a tenth to be left for them, and that they should be called to partake of the solemn feast before the Lord, and pronounceth a curse upon him, who *perverteth the cause of the widow and the fatherless:* nay, amongst the reasons of the destruction of the Jewish people, he numbers this, *that they judged not the cause of the Widow and the fatherless.**

See then how strong and powerful an advocate the Widow hath in the midst of her affliction to sustain and support her soul; and how great consolation in the deepest grief she may gain from these and the like precious promises: *Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy Widows trust in me, saith the Lord.*† Upon these promises this helpless Widow doubtless supported her soul; and considered it as some mitigation of her distress, that she had a Son surviving. But,—this *only* Son also was taken away from her: could she now do other than think, that she was indeed wholly cast off, that the promises of God were to her of none effect, and that the greatness of her sins had drawn down upon her these two evils, *widowhood and the loss of seed*, which were esteemed the two greatest curses in Israel. The whole city was moved at this her so great calamity, and in sorrow they attend the mournful funeral, no ray of

* Exod. xxii. 22, & seq. Deut. xiv. 29. xxiv. 19. and xxvi. 12, 13. Isa. i. 23, &c.

† Jerem. xlix. 11. See this promise most beautifully introduced p. 39—45; Vol. i. of the ingenious Mr. Hervey's *Meditations*. Edit. 10.

comfort, no gleam of hope dawning upon this dark midnight of blackest misery.

From hence we are naturally led to remark the wisdom of God in sometimes suffering his servants to be driven to extremities past all hopes, past all human help. Frequently he comforts not in the beginning of troubles; but though he refrains his assisting hand, we must not therefore conclude, that his promises are vain, and ourselves utterly rejected. Jesus, you see, on account, and for the sake of this woman, directed his way from Capernaum to Nain: but he does not preserve the young man from death, he does not come, while he lies languishing on the bed of sickness, as neither did he, to his friend LAZARUS, though well informed of his situation:* but when all was desperate, when all human relief was found unavailing; when the Son was now dead, and the wretched mother deprived of all hope, abandoned herself wholly to weeping and sorrow, then Christ came and met this afflicted Widow! And when she through the greatness of her distress, could neither speak, nor beg relief, then was Jesus moved by *his own compassion* towards her—his tender loving heart, on the sight of her calamity, was touched with inmost pity towards her: for we have such an High-Priest, who hath therefore been tried in all things, that he might be *touched* with the *feeling* and *sympathy*† of our infirmities. His compassion shewed itself in the ready relief which he bestowed, he dried up the mother's plenteous tears, by restoring to her, her Son, her only Son; thus filling her heart with infinitely more joy, than if he had only cured his

* John xi. 11. *Our friend* Lazarus sleepeth, *said he, but I go to* wake *him.* Ver. 14. Lazarus *is dead.* See the following Sermon on *Lazarus raised.*

† The original is emphatical μη δυναμενον ΣΥΜΠΑΘΗΣΑΙ. Heb. iv. 15.

disease, and so preserved him from death. We, it is true, have no reason to expect such supernatural relief: yet thus we are confirmed in our knowledge of the compassion of our great High-Priest; who albeit he may awhile defer his assistance, yet is *faithful, and will not suffer us to be tried above that we are able;* but will either deliver us from, or mitigate the smart of our afflictions; but will either pour his consolation into our hearts confirm us with patience, or strengthen, stablish, settle us in that faith, which gaineth the victory. Whenever therefore he delayeth to help and relieve us, let us look up with a believing eye, to this poor Widow; who was reduced to the utmost distress, to the very last extremity: and yet she found comfort and consolation, then when all the help of man was useless and unavailing; *bread* and *water* in abundance, when perishing amidst the severest famine.*

"The parent is apt fondly to cry out, saith one, O that thou, this blessed Lord had been near, when the darling of my heart was snatched away from me, and left in the dust of death! But he indeed was near, for he hath the keys of death and of the unseen world: and this we know, that if our beloved children are sleeping in him, his voice shall at length awaken them, and he will deliver them to us to die no more: and will himself graciously take part in that mutual and lasting joy, which he shall give to us and them."† In such or any other his afflicting providences, let us learn to see his fatherly and correcting hand: and remember, that *blessed are they that mourn,* mourn with spiritual grief, *for they shall be comforted,* that blessed are they *who endure chastening, God thus dealing with them as with sons:* and let us be taught to reason in some

* See 2 Kings, vi. 26—xxx. 7, throughout.
† Doddridge's improvement of the history.

such manner as this: "This dispensation is indeed grievous to me: but it is the good hand of my God upon me: and though he hath tried me to the uttermost, though he hath taken all present comfort from me, and left me no door of hope, that I can behold: yet I doubt not but in the wisdom of his providence, even *this* shall prove to the good of my soul, and I shall have cause to bless him for it through endless ages. Though I am in the valley of Achor, yet let me remember that he hath promised to make that valley the *door of hope*, and though he giveth me only the bitter waters of Marah to drink, yet let me remember that the wood of that cross, which alone maketh afflictions light and easy, can sweeten even these bitter waters." Thus if we reason and resign to our sovereign Father's good pleasure, we shall move him to have compassion on us, who wanteth no motive to incline him to pity, more than his own free love and our misery.

Thus should calamities not only lead us to an absolute resignation, but also to a dependance upon God, for which frequently the continuance of an affliction may be as useful and necessary as the first application of it: he frequently intending thereby to prove our sincerity and try our virtues, to shew us the vanity and inability of human aid, and to vindicate his own honour by making us thoroughly sensible, whence all our deliverances do really come, and upon whom we must absolutely depend for them. Often he vouchsafeth not any deliverance; but still wise in all his dealings with the children of men,* to wean the fond heart from the

* I know not where this truth is more beautifully exemplified, than in Dr. Parnell's fine poem of the Hermit, which well merits the reader's perusal. The Hermit, doubtful of the ways of Providence, set out from his retired cell to visit the world, a companion soon joined him, who, after having done several astonishing things to the Hermit's surprise, and particularly killed the

world, deprives it of all those objects of *false* love, which kept its affections from the *true:* for when like this widow, we are spoiled of all human comfort, when all our hopes, centered, as it were, in one neck,* are cut off at one blow, then are we led to look beyond the grave, to seek for the *divine husband*, that can never fail us, to rejoice in the spiritual offspring, that holy hope and heavenly love, which shall live and flourish with us in immortal beauty. And to this,

II. The miracle before us would principally point our view. Our Saviour in this young man, the only son of his mother, carried out dead, would represent to us *our own soul*,‖ dead in sin, and

favourite child of a father, who had given them a very hospitable reception—assumed the form of an angel, and unravelled all the mystery to him: concerning the child killed by him, he speaks thus—

> Long had our *pious friend* in virtue trod,
> But now the child half wean'd his heart from God:
> (Child of his age) for him he liv'd in pain,
> And measur'd back his steps to earth again;
> To what excesses had his dotage run?
> But God, to *save* the father, took the son.
> To all but thee, in fits he seem'd to go,
> (And 'twas my ministry to deal the blow.)
> The poor fond parent humbled in the dust,
> Now owns in tears the punishment was just.

* The Roman emperor Nero used to wish, that the Roman people had all but one neck, that he might satiate his unnatural and strange cruelty, by cutting them off at one blow.

‖ See p. 128. foregoing. St. Ambrose agrees with St. Austin, that "the image of the church is set forth here: and because it representeth our estates, it is worth the opening. The *Widow*, saith he, signifieth the *church:* the dead young man, every sinner that liveth without repentance, and the *bier*, the body of sin. The widow bewaileth her dead son, that is to say, the church lamenteth for the unrepentance of the wicked, and entreateth Christ to move them and draw them to him by his word and his Spirit. Christ therefore biddeth them that carried the corpse to stand still; for the sinner is borne to hell by *four*, which are these, 1. Hope of longer life. 2. Looking upon other men's faults.

ready, when the pulse shall cease to play, ready to be cast into the eternal grave, the bottomless pit, unless the Saviour of the world prevent us with his grace, and by his all-prevailing word, raise us up to a new and better life here, that we may be raised to life everlasting hereafter. And he fully proves, to our great and endless comfort, his power to do so, giving us at the same time the most lively pledge of our future resurrection. He uses two outward means; first, he touches the bier, *that whereon the young man lay*, (not in a coffin as some have supposed, coffins not being then in use) and then he speaks the word, *young man, I say*, &c. to shew by the first, that the destruction of death and restoration of life, is the virtue and work of his own person, not only in his divine, but in his human nature also: that nature which he took from us, and *filled with the fulness of God;* by the second, to teach us, that the mean or instrument by which these benefits of his *person* are ministered to us, is that divine word of his, by which he will destroy death and restore life to our souls. We have already seen many instances of the power of this divine word; but the present as much excels them all, as the raising a

3. Presumption upon God's mercy. 4. Flattery of lewd company. Now if thou wilt rise from the death of sin, thou must needs hear Christ, who biddeth the bearers stay: first, therefore, thou must exclude hope of long life, because life is uncertain, (as the experience of many teacheth and peril is at hand, as is to be seen in the rich glutton:) again, thou must not set another man's evil life before thee, as a pattern to follow, but thou must submit thyself to God, as Abraham did: thou must trust him, and thou must amend thy conditions, knowing that the multitude of offenders will excuse no man in judgment. It availeth not Adam to say, the woman, that thou gavest me, she gave me of the apple. 3dly. Lay away presumption of God's mercy, for this presumption is a great contempt of God. Rom. ii. 4thly. Put away flatterers that entice thee to evil. And when thou hast done so, lean upon Christ, with lively faith, and he will quicken thee to eternal life. *Heminge.* p. 235.

body from death doth the healing of all its infirmities. As no human power, word, or work was able to save from death, much less restore to life this son of the Widow: so no *human power* can save from death or restore to life the sinful soul of man, now in the way, every moment in the broad and beaten way to destruction; *much people of the city attending*, numbers going before, thousands following after, every creature doomed to partake either of this life or death. And while we are in this way Christ never fails to meet us; unasked, he prevents us with the riches of his grace: he is moved with compassion at the sight of our calamities: abhors us not, though filthy dead corpses, but comes to, touches and calls us.—How did he display the riches of this divine love, when man first fell, and lay helpless and hopeless of any relief: then of his own free grace and mercy, he promised him comfort, he raised him up from whence he was fallen, and gave him good hope in the expected *seed of the woman.* And to finish the great work, ordained from the beginning of time, he came at length into our poor and miserable world, took our nature upon him, left eternal blessedness and the adoration of his glorious servants above, to visit and comfort our *widowed* souls, deprived of their divine husband, bereaved of their youthful offspring, and in the very depth of calamity and distress. To raise us up from death and restore us to life, *himself, (herein was love!* adore it, O ye sons of men, laud it, O ye angels of heaven!) *himself* sustained the death that was our due, and rose again, as a sure pledge of our present and future resurrection: himself, good and compassionate *Samaritan,** came down into our vale of misery, and seeing the wounded

* See Luke x. 33. I propose, by the help of God, to be hereafter more large on this divine and incomparable *parable.*

helpless traveller, lying in the last extremity, stript naked and wounded, had compassion on him, of his own free love and pity came to his relief, poured wine and oil into his wounds, raised him up and brought him to a place of hospitality and rest.

And as he hath thus displayed the riches of his love for man in general, so hath he extended that love, that free grace and mercy, no less to every particular, to every individual soul of man. How hath he in his mercy prevented us with his favour: granting us in infancy, a happy admission into his church and covenant; sealing us for his own children, and giving us that spirit which faileth not to remind us continually of what we are, and what we should be: and besides the internal admonitions of the spirit and conscience, how doth he continually call to and plead with us, by his word read and preached, *to us* of this place and nation particularly, blest as we are with the means of grace, with the gospel of Christ, in its greatest truth and purity? And how moreover doth this good God strive with us, and labour by all possible outward as well as inward means, to raise us up from the death of sin unto the life of holiness: especially in this our day, how do his *awful providences* summon us to repent, and to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance?* Are we but wise enough to hear, repent and believe, death shall indeed have no dominion over us; all his power shall be subdued under our feet, through the might of our triumphant Conqueror, and having vanquished him here, having spoiled him of his sting, we shall reign superior to his power with all the saints in glory.

But, let us ever remember, unless we are saved from the present death of sin, *arise* and walk in newness of life here, we can never be saved from its wages, death eternal hereafter. And we can be saved from the death of sin no otherwise than by the

power of Christ: and that power will most certainly be exerted for our salvation, if we are only willing to receive and ready to embrace his proffer of deliverance and life. And who but would embrace that proffer?—Who can be less concerned for a soul created to live or die eternally, than a mother for the death of her child,—whom she might have the comfortable hope of meeting again in bliss?* And yet these worldly calamities far more deeply affect our hearts, than the sense of our spiritual miseries: we see them not, we do not discern; or rather we do not consider them: nay, many are bold enough, because *blind* enough, to tell us—"They see no danger, they believe not their souls to be in any such desperate estate: all seems well enough with them, their heart is whole, they feel no sickness, what need have they of a physician—they are alive, what need have they of this same present resurrection from the dead." These assertions are the strongest proofs of what they deny: if the sacred Scriptures be true, all men are by nature *dead*, dead in sin, *are alienated from the life of God*, all are *sick*, from *the crown of the head to the sole of the foot*, &c.; all, (yet unawakened by the power of Christ) all are *asleep* in carnal security—wherefore the apostle in the emphatic words of the prophet, calls aloud to *all, awake thou that* SLEEPEST *and* ARISE *from the*

* The sense of this should mitigate all our worldly sorrows: "Though there is a reason, says Henry, common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force, against inordinate and excessive grief for their death—that they shall rise again—shall rise in glory; and, therfore, we must not sorrow as those that have no hope. 1 Thess. iv. 13. Let *Rachel* that *weeps for her children, refrain her eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord*, that thy children, *shall come again to their own border*. Jer. xxxi. 17. And let our passion at such a time be checked and calmed by the consideration of Christ's *compassion*: his *partaking* with us in all our sufferings. Grotius has a remark much to the same purpose.

DEAD, *and Christ shall give thee light.** But were the Scriptures silent on this head, is not our own experience, is not the voice of all antiquity bewailing the inward prevalence of evil, a sufficient testimony of the life of God departed from the soul, *of our being very far gone from original righteousness,*† of our *death* to spiritual things, of our *fast sleeping* in matters of the last and best, of eternal concern?

Let the natural man to disprove this, shew, if he can, the same regard, care, and anxiety for the *eternal welfare* of his *soul,* as for the *present* welfare of his *body;* let him do one good or religious act, with purity of intention, and singleness of heart: let him pray to the *Supreme Being,* one quarter of an hour without distracted thoughts and roving imaginations: let him *love* God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, let him *love* his neighbour as himself: for it is written, *This* DO *and thou shalt live.* But so little able is he to do this, rather let us say, —As a proof of the rectitude of thy nature, *free thyself,* O man, from that disrelish and dislike which thou hast, to God, his Christ, his Spirit and his laws, deliver thyself from that hatred and malice, that pride and envy, that contempt and ill-will which reign and rage in thy breast continually: and unite all thy endeavours, seek with sincerity after the things that pertain to thy peace; thus deliver thyself from that weakness, gross darkness, bias to evil, opposition to spiritual truth, proneness to lies and falsehood, that natural perverseness of thy understanding, will and affections, from that love of self, and the creature which is the sure mark of the soul's death, and in direct opposition to the life and love of God shed abroad in the heart;—Deliver thyself,

* 2 Cor. v. 14. Ephes. ii. 1. and iv. 18. Isai. i. 6. Ephes. v. 14.

† The words of the ninth article of our church.

O man, by thine own strength from all or any the least of these plagues of thy heart, and we will grant that thou art not a fallen creature, and that thy soul doth not need a resurrection, through grace, from the dead.—But seeing these things are impossible for man unregenerate, for man without the help of God's Spirit,* to perform; seeing he must feel and know, *that the thoughts of his heart, from his youth are only evil continually,* can he deny that he is dead to God?—will he refuse to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this* DEATH!—Can you but thus cry to God, truly feeling and lamenting your great sinfulness, his mercy is nigh at hand, *seek and you shall find,* persevere and you will speedily have reason to say with the same St. Paul, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,* through him, who by his word, hath raised me from death, hath begotten me again to a lively hope, and given me to walk in newness of life!

This is a great and an important change; a change which must be experienced on earth, or it can never be wrought at all. And we may easily satisfy ourselves as to the truth and certainty of it: when our Saviour had spoken the word, *young man, I say unto thee arise,* upon which the young man arose, began to speak and was delivered to his mother, he could not be ignorant of the great change wrought upon him. He could not but know, that whereas he was dead, now he was alive. Neither can the soul, raised up from the death of sin to a

* Just as impossible as it was, for this young man to have raised himself. "The young man was dead, saith one, and could not arise by any power of his own, no more can those that are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins: yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him *arise,* when a *power* went along with that word to *put life* into him. The gospel call to all people, to young people particularly, is, *Arise,* arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life.

new life of righteousness, be ignorant of that change. It may not indeed (as some have asserted) always know the moment of its new birth, or the precise time of its first resurrection, seeing there are indisputably many, very many far advanced in the kingdom of God, who are utter strangers to this matter; but it must know, when it truly believes in and relies on Jesus, when it *loves* God and its neighbour, when it hates and loathes, worse than death or hell, that sin which it before embraced to its bosom, when its life is changed, and its whole affections no longer dedicated to the world, the flesh, and the devil, but to heaven, holiness, humility and love. Happy will it be for us, if we are careful to evidence the truth of our new birth to ourselves and others by these *scriptural* marks: since *such alone*, can never fail us: and since such alone can give us a comfortable sense of our pardon in Christ: *For hereby*, saith St. John, do we *know*, that we *know* him, if we *keep his commandments:* and, we *know*, that we have *passed from death unto life*, because we *love* the *brethren:* he that *loveth* not his brother, abideth in *death:* blessed are they, whose *love* and *obedience* gives them to know, that they abide in God, and God in them: for *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

III. The resurrection of the young man, cast a holy fear on all who saw it, caused them to glorify God, and to look with awful admiration on this wonderful person, whom they acknowledged to be that great and expected prophet, whose office it was to raise the dead, and of whom it had been foretold *that the dead should hear his voice and live.* And no doubt this young man and his mother, living afterwards in the faith and fear of God their Saviour, in their city, continued illustrious testimonies of the truth of this miracle, and instruments to stir up many to the sight and faith of this Jesus, whose

fame was spread throughout all Juda, and all the country round about.—And such a resurrection as that before described, even the resrrrection of a sinner* from the death of sin, to the life of holiness, will and must have the same glorious effect: the ancient Christians were wont to use this as one great argument of the truth and power of their religion‖—would God such examples abounded, that they might now also be used as efficaciously for the conviction of all unbelievers! for such examples must needs abundantly prevail: all who behold the man, so late a slave to sin and iniquity, wallowing in lust and uncleanness, bemired in the filth of self and sensuality, now purified from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, walking in all the commandments of God blameless, holy, chaste, temperate, humble,—will and must be filled with the same holy fear, the same praise to God, the same awful regard to this blessed Jesus, whose hand hath done this mighty work, and by the faith of whom this man declareth himself to be *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

O that the sense hereof, of not only saving our own souls from death, but of thus bringing glory to God, and good to our neighbour, would stir up every heart to set about the great work, and to come before the compassionate Jesus, imploring his divine aid and efficacious word to save and to restore! Sooner or later we must all be convinced, that the

* Nilus also observes, that this is signified in the present miracle. *Tale quidem miraculum reipsa contigit: si autem volueris etiam illud spiritualiter accipere, quo extra te, homo, & procul vagaris?* Te ipsum *noveris esse filium viduæ—Know thyself to be this son of the widow,* &c. See the author.

‖ See their several apologies: it would be well, if we could now so emphatically appeal to the mighty changes wrought by the word of Christ—to the drunkards, adulterers, covetous, &c. transformed into sober, chaste, liberal, &c christians.

care of the soul is the *one thing needful;* all beside will vanish as the smoke; all beside like melting snow will deceive our warmest and most tenacious grasp: all beside will be found but like leaning on a foaming wave of the ocean; not only fail, but overwhelm and swallow us up in destruction. Of death, a future resurrection, an impartial judgment, and an eternal assignment to endless bliss or woe, we want not daily and awakening monitors; to arouse us to a serious sense of our present state, to spur us on in our christian course, to animate us in the great work, wherein we are engaged, that we may not fall short of the prize of our high calling. If we neglect these, miserable are we: what would the soul that hath been a stranger to God, now on the bed of death, now struggling for the last gasp, what would it give for one year, one month, one week, to spend in fervent repentance and zealous amendment of life!* There we see the true estimate of all human things: Christ and his religion, his faith, fear and love, are found the only comforts on the bed of death, are found the only things that can make the good man's pillow in his sickness; for they are the only things which will attend him beyond the grave; —when houses, lands, and fair possessions, wife and children, friends and lovers,‖ are vanishing

* See that awakening description of the death of Altamont in the *Centaur not fabulous,* p. 155, where we hear from the mouth of that self-condemned unfortunate, "O time, time, it is fit thou should thus strike thy murderer to the heart: how art thou fled for ever!—a month—O for a single week—I ask not for years; though an age were too little for the much I have to do." See too, a description of the death of Penitens, no less striking and solemn in Mr. Law's *Serious Call.*

‖ *Linquenda tellus & domus, & placens*
Uxor, &c.

See Horace's beautiful 14th ode of his 2d Book.

The following lines from the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February, 1756, must please the serious reader.

from the dim eyes, and fading on the sight, for ever closing to the earth, to open for ever on boundless eternity!—when carried out to the sepulchre, like this son of the Widow, our larger fortunes and possessions may procure us a more pompous funeral, more horses to our hearse, more coaches to attend, and finer feathers to wave their useless honours o'er our clay; *the city*, our weeping friends and relations may accompany the lifeless corpse, (if haply *fashion* will permit them to pay this last sad debt to our obsequies,) but the cold corrupting body hath no sense of this grandeur, no regard to this pomp, no feeling of this kindness or grief: if it could speak, it would say—"Weep not for me, weep for yourselves—read in my clay-cold, motionless corpse, a lesson of your own mortality—and prepare, my friends, prepare." Thus every corpse, and every grave turns preacher, and with powerful, though dumb eloquence, proclaims emphatic truth to each beholder! minding us of that death of sin, wherein we lie; of that death of body, which was

O the sad day
When men shall shake their heads, and say
Of miserable me,
Hark how he groans, look how he pants for breath,
See how he struggles in the pangs of death!
When they shall say of these mine eyes,
How hollow and how dim they be!
Look how his breast doth swell and rise
Against his potent enemy!
When some old friend shall step to my bedside,
Touch my chill face, and thence shall gently slide,
And when his next companions say,
How does he do? what hopes? shall turn away,
Answering only with a lift-up hand,
Who can his fate withstand?
Then shall a gasp or two do more,
Than all my rhetoric could before,
Persuade the world to trouble me no more!

the consequence of that sin, and which we must all undergo; of that death of soul, which if dead to God, we must also suffer everlastingly!—And will not the sense and dread hereof be sufficient to awaken your most serious concern? All depends upon one point, and that one it is not difficult to resolve: Are we now in a state of death, or, are we in a state of life?—Have we ever known the death unto sin, and the new-birth unto righteousness? Are we, in short, new creatures? *For if any man be in Christ*, saith Paul, *he is a new creature.* Have we then left our old state of sin for Christ's sake, and now chosen God as our portion and happiness, being able to say, *old things are passed away, behold—all things are become new?*—Blessed, for ever blessed are they who can satisfy themselves in this awful particular.—Blessed, for ever blessed are they who thus *have a part in the first resurrection, on such the second death shall have no power: but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years!*

For those amongst us, who have not yet experienced this saving change, who yet have not been raised by the word and power of Christ, from the death and power of sin, O that they would be wise and consider, that they would well weigh the infinite danger they are in, that they would one moment draw aside the veil which sin, the world and Satan have cast over their eyes, and view that state eternal, to which all men must be consigned! Then they could not think it of small moment to be banished, for ever banished from the joys of heaven; then they could not think it of small moment to dwell, for ever dwell, with everlasting burnings! O, recollect how fatiguing and painful it is even in perfect health to lie on a bed of down, restless and sleepless, when one would fain close one's eyes and cannot; but how much worse is this when tortured with

racking pains, and when there is no whole part in our body:—What then must it be to be spread out upon a bed of fire, to lie tortured with extremest anguish night and day, without the least respite, without the least hope, and what infinitely enhances all the rest, without *end*—an eternity of pain *—merciful Lord Jesus, what soul but shudders at the thought! —O, convince the thoughtless heart, and teach us to know, that nothing we can do or suffer on earth, can be too much to avoid this house and place of torment!

My brethren, let me persuade you, rather let these terrors of the Lord persuade you to arise and be doing: to shake off your former negligence, and to bestir yourselves in the great work for which you were sent into the world: answer the end of your creation, answer the end of your dear Redeemer's bleeding for you on the accursed tree!—See how this solitary Widow lamented over her Son! it was her only Son, she had no hopes, when this was gone; all perished in him: yours is your only soul; you have but one soul to lose, that perishing all hopes are over, all is lost to you for ever: O that the fear of losing it in everlasting horrors would raise in you the like grief, anxious sorrow and holy mourning for its dreaded loss! And can you say, is it reasonable, that you should be more hard-hearted, that you should have less feeling for the death, the death unending of your soul, your immortal soul, created by God for infinite blessedness,

* Doctor Young puts these emphatical words into the mouth of a *guilty soul*, in his poem on the *Last Day*. See book III. where after bewailing his misery, he thus entreats the Deity.

> Forbid it, and O grant, great God, at least
> This one, this slender, almost no request:
> When I have wept a thousand lives away,
> When torment is grown weary of its prey:
> When I have rav'd ten thousand years in fire,
> Ten thousand thousands, let me then expire!

redeemed by Jesus Christ for everlasting glory—than this mortal Widow for a child, mortal like herself, whose grief however intense, must speedily have had an end, whose son however spared now, must ere long have returned to the earth from whence he was taken! Will you not drop one tear for this perishing soul, now on the brink of destruction, now in the gates of death? Will you not implore the compassion of him, who is ready to comfort, who is willing to pardon? Will you not return and repent? that so the blessed Jesus may speak the saving word, and you, by his power, arise and speak aloud the glories and goodness of his redeeming grace?*—God of his infinite mercy open and incline all your hearts to this good purpose: and out of the riches of his compassionate love, so convince you all of your danger, so prevent you all with his grace, so powerfully impress his word upon your hearts, that at his call, you may arise from the death of sin here, and at his awful summons arise from the grave to a joyful resurrection hereafter! And, blessed Lord, thou who wantest no other motive to thy pity and compassion, but our wretchedness and utter inability to help ourselves, save us we beseech thee, save us for thine own sake, break our stubborn wills, and enliven our dead affections, with thy love, *open the doors of the prison, and reveal unto us hidden secrets*, deliver us from sin, fill us with grace, keep us steadfast, and enable us to

* If we arise, we must *walk* and *speak*, as the young man did: "Christ's dominion over death, was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word: he that *was dead, sat up*, without any other help; when Christ put life into him, he made it to appear by his sitting up. Have we grace from Christ, let us shew it. Another evidence of life was, than he *began to speak*, for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he opens the lips in *prayer* and *praise*." Henry on the place.

persevere in thy truth unto the end, to be *faithfu unto death,* that so we may obtain a *crown of life.*

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE WIND AND SEA REBUKED.

MARK iv. 39.

And he arose and rebuked the Wind, and said unto the Sea, Peace, be still; and the Wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

HOW natural was the remark of the disciples upon this signal display of our Lord's power,—*what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?* And how reasonable was their fear conceived from the sense of their own great weakness and unworthiness, who after so much heavenly instruction, so many divine parables, so many proofs of his sovereign authority, yet were afraid of perishing with this Son of God, yet *were so doubtful and of so little faith!*—How weak and vain a thing is man, how elate in prosperity, how abject in adversity! bold in security, to dare, to defy, to question Omnipotence; but when that Omnipotence is armed against him, when danger surrounds him on every side, how impotent and timorous, how forward to implore the mercy, he hath long despised and abused! The sense of God's infinite power, which in a moment, if his wrath be kindled, yea but a little, can destroy ten thousand of the people more easily than man can crush the feeblest

moth, should (one would imagine) bend our stout hearts in awful dread before him; and, as we boast of wisdom, incline us to use all our endeavours for the engaging that almighty arm in our defence. But without *faith* in his power, as well as will to protect and save, we can never build any strong hope, or found any sure confidence in him; and as man, by nature, is averse to casting away all self-dependance, and relying solely upon the merits and mercy of another; as pride still contradicts renunciation of self, and resignation to the will of God, therefore it is, that in much mercy, he frequently suffereth us to be brought into great jeopardy, to be in *danger of sinking;* that, all hopes of rescue from our strength being removed, we may at length call upon him, and cast ourselves at his feet, with the earnest cry, *Lord, save, or we perish!* Nay, indeed these trials and perils, are often designed by God, not only to beget true faith in man, and thorough self-renunciation: but also to prove us, that we may at once be convinced of our present weakness, and be confirmed in our faith, for the future, by the mercies and deliverances vouchsafed unto us.

This seems to have been pretty much the case, with the disciples, who (it is possible) conceived their faith in their Lord to be much stronger than it really was, and who from the distinguishing favours, which they enjoyed, of his private converse, and explication of his parables to them, imagined themselves much more advanced than the rest, and able to do and suffer all things: this however appears manifestly to have been the case with St. Peter, who had far higher notions of his own strength than were either true or becoming; and who as appearing of all the rest much the most presumptuous, was therefore suffered to fall more shamefully than any of them, except Judas the traitor. To convince them therefore of their weakness, and confirm them

more and more in their faith, Christ now wrought a mighty deliverance for them, and, when all possibility of human help was withdrawn, stretched forth his almighty hand to save and deliver, proving his power over things, which we should conceive least subject to rule, least likely to hear and obey a *word*, that *they*, having seen his power over sicknesses, and all manner of disease, over winds and seas, far more irresistible and uncontrolable than they, and immediately after this, over devils and infernal spirits, to us more formidable than all the rest, might have no doubt of his sovereign rule in heaven and earth, but repose themselves with strong confidence on his love and protection.

Neither was it for them only, that these wonders were wrought, these mighty works recorded; it was for us also, who are embarked on the same stormy sea, who have the same dangers, doubts and difficulties to encounter and overcome, and who have need of every motive to confirm, increase and strengthen our faith, weak and wavering as it is,—fearful and doubtful as we are of that *loving* and *almighty* arm, which yet we know is stretched out for the defence and succour of all those, *who fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.* That we, laying hold on this hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, may so obtain a strong consolation; *may be rooted and grounded in faith*, it will conduce, I trust, through the assistance of that divine Spirit from whom all increase cometh to consider the circumstances of the present miracle, and the instructive lessons, which we may derive to ourselves from hence.

I. The first thing which strikes us in this history, is the imminent danger to which the disciples were reduced.

Christ had invited all the labouring and heavy-laden to come to him: and here we have all the

disciples, under the greatest distress conceivable; coming to, and calling upon him in this day of their trouble: brought to the last extremity of danger, that all hopes of safety being removed, they might have the stronger and more grateful memory of this deliverance vouchsafed them by their Lord: than which nothing can be supposed more marvellous and mighty.—After they had launched into the deep, at the command of Jesus, which was smooth and calm upon their first descent into it—*Behold,* says St. Matthew, noting how wholly unexpected, sudden and violent it was, there arose a great tempest in the sea, a commotion uncommonly terrible, impetuous as an hurricane, fearful as a rending earthquake:* there came down a *storm of wind* on the lake, so furious that it tossed the ship like a feather before it, while the billows, rolling mountains high, whirled it with a fierce rebound, and, by the joint force of these contending elements, it was now carried up to the heavens, and in a moment plunged down again to the depths: *Their soul was melted because of the trouble:* for the sea beat with such irresistible violence unto the vessel, that it was now full of water, covered with the waves, and *they were at their wits end,*‖ in the very last extremity; having tried all their endeavours, and exerted all their sailing arts in vain, now were they just going to sink into the deep, now the ship was about to perish, now the merciless waves were opening their greedy jaws to swallow them up, now there was but one moment, as it should seem, between them and eternity! —

A dreadful situation indeed—but where was the Master during all the time of this horrible tempest?

* The words in the original are very strong Σεισμὸς and Λαιλαψ ανεμου. See Leigh's *Critic. Sacr.* for the words. See Jonah i. 4.

‖ See that most beautiful description of a storm at sea, Psalm cvii. 23—31, which is superior to all that ever Heathen poet wrote.

he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; and wanted only to be awaked by their prayers to arise and help them: had he thought good, he could have easily prevented this storm and these trials, but like a skilful master, he was willing to exercise those disciples, whom he had appointed the champions of faith, that no danger might hereafter terrify them, and that now they might not arrogate any thing to themselves from Christ's choice and preference of them to others: and that they might know, that those who are called to his kingdom, are called to the taking up of a cross; to suffering and labours, not to worldly ease and temporal enjoyments. This storm *was for their sakes:* and to teach both *them* and *us*, that though we sail over the ocean of life, with Christ in our vessel, yet we are not secure from storms, yet we must not expect to be free from trials and difficulties. The best of Christians must not hope to be exempt herefrom: this world is a world of troubles and afflictions, a tempestuous ocean that cannot rest; here *we shall have tribulation;* it is in the harbour only of eternal rest, where we must expect to enjoy an everlasting calm. Those, whom Christ loves best, he frequently exercises most: not for their destruction, but their greater increase of glory: hence St. Paul confesses, that *he had been pressed out of measure, above strength*, insomuch that he *despaired* of life; that he had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not *trust* in himself, but in *God*, which raiseth the dead: who delivered him from so great a death, and comforted him in all his tribulation, that he might be able to comfort them, which are in any trouble, by the comfort, wherewith he himself was comforted of God. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us*, continues he, *so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*— Look at all the patriarchs and the prophets, all the

holy men of old favoured and distinguished of God; look at these blessed apostles chosen and ordained of Christ himself, look at the noble army of martyrs, at the first and triumphant members of the church of Christ;—and you will find this truth fully exemplified, that the children of God, while on this stormy ocean, have ever been exercised with storms and tempests, in perils of waters, in perils in the sea, in infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions for Christ's sake. Let not these therefore, if they fall to the lot of any of you, my brethren, shake your faith, or cause you to doubt or distrust the favour and mercy of God: though sunk in the deepest night of affliction, though almost overwhelmed with the waves of trouble, though the Lord seemeth to hide his countenance from you, and to have forgotten to be gracious: yet trust in him, though he should kill you: if you perish, resolve to perish at his feet; and for your consolation, remember that though he seem absent, yet he is not far from you, that though he sleep, yet his *heart waketh toward you:* and that if you have him indeed in your vessel, if his faith and love reign in your soul, you can never sink, you can never perish:§ the least spark of that faith and love, when

§ Bishop Reynolds in his fine Comment on the cxth psalm hath a passage so much to the present purpose, and so refreshing to the humble soul, that I cannot deny my reader the pleasure of it. "It is true, indeed, saith the soul, expostulating with Satan, I have a naughty flesh, the seeds of all mischief in my nature: but the first means which brought me hereunto, was the believing of thy lies, and therefore I will no longer entertain thy hellish reasonings against mine own peace. I have a spirit which teacheth me to bewail the frowardness of my own heart, to deny mine own will and works, to long and aspire after perfection in Christ, to adhere with delight and purpose of heart to his law, to lay hold with all my strength upon that plank of salvation, which in this shipwreck of my soul is cast out unto me. These affections of my heart come not from the earthly Adam, for whatsoever is earthly, is sensual and devilish too. And if they be holy and heavenly, I will not believe that God will put any thing of heaven into a

kindled into prayer, will draw down the riches of his mercy and compassion, and gain you a happy deliverance from the storm. *For I know thy works and thy tribulation,* saith he: *fear none of those things, which thou shalt suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation* TEN DAYS: (behold the time is determined of God, when our troubles shall have end; hitherto shall the proud waves go, and no further!) *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!*—For, that from *him alone* we are to expect this deliverance from dangers, this crown of our faithful labours, we are taught,

II. By the application which the disciples made unto him.

Being now in such infinite jeopardy, the ship ready to sink, the waves rushing in, all hopes of life gone, all appearances of safety vanished, all deliverance from the arm of flesh hopeless,—at length they come to Christ, with earnest importunity they awake him, with death in their eyes, and chill terror trembling on their tongue, *Master, master,* they cry, *we perish! Lord save us, we perish! Master, carest thou not that we perish!*

It is well and truly said, that, "if a man would learn to pray, he must go to sea." Instant danger makes us importunate. It would be well if the sense of our continual need of Christ's saving and protecting hand, raised the same earnest and fervent devotion in our hearts. The disciples use the right means of redress; and they apply with great fervour, though not with beseeming confidence and

vessel of hell. Sure I am, he that died for me, when I did not desire him, will in no wise cast me away, when I come unto him. He that hath given me a will to love his service, and to lean upon his promises, will in mercy accept the will for the deed, and in due time accomplish the work of holiness which he hath begun.—Quarto edit. p. 45.

humility: *Master,* CAREST *thou not that we perish,* was but a very harsh word to him, who came from his Father's bosom, solely to seek and to save that which was lost, to still the storms and tempests of a raging world, to speak peace to souls, to rescue men from perishing. Though their prayer was fervent, it was full of fear. But of this more hereafter.

In the mean time, from this application of theirs to Christ in time of need, we learn to cast away all human confidence, all dependance upon the arm of flesh only, and to fly to Christ our Lord and Master for help and succour, for deliverance from every storm: For *thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the* Lord. It is observable, that the disciples did not apply to Christ, till they had tried every other means; all arts of sailing, and every endeavour was first used: the ship was almost covered with the waves, *now sinking* before they would come to Christ, with a *Lord save, or we perish:* a lively picture of the heart of man, by nature estranged and alienated from God and Christ, which would try every means, and seek for salvation in any way, rather than accept it as a free gift from Christ. To cast away all self-righteousness is grievous to the heart in its natural state of pride and affectation of independency. Man would still be as God,* still work out and merit from himself his own salvation; and he must be driven to the last extremity, see the insufficiency of law and self, of morality and works, before he can cast away all other confidence, and apply to *Jesus,* with a LORD, SAVE, *or I* PERISH!§ It is this

* Gen. iii. 5.

§ There are no compositions, in my weak judgment, more likely to convince men hereof, and to shew that every other scheme, save the christian, is absolutely insufficient to salvation, than the

faith alone which can avail the soul, and thus we must apply, if we would obtain the gift of God in Christ, utterly renouncing all self-dependance, and perfectly assured, that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost; we must apply to him as *our Master* and *our Lord: our Master* who hath taken the care of us, into whose faithful hands and administration we commit all our concerns: and who, therefore, is engaged by every tye, to look to our welfare, to protect and defend us; O happy are they who can truly call Christ, *Master*, then they have the firmest grounds to rely upon his *power*, and to call him *Lord*, the sovereign disposer of all events, the Lord of heaven and earth, who doth both there, and in the broad seas, whatsoever seemeth him good. When therefore, the stormy wind descendeth, and lifteth up the dangerous billows of this world against us, when these winds and waves in dreadful conflict so cover and fill our ship, bring our souls into so great danger, that we are every moment in danger of perishing; then to whom should we fly, but to this gracious *master*, this almighty *Lord;* whose eyes are ever upon us, and whose ears are ever open to our prayers; he may indeed seem, as though he sleepeth: he may seem as though he regarded not, when the ship appeareth in the last extremity; but this he doth only to kindle the ardour and increase the fervency of our prayers. The more therefore danger threatens us, the more let us cry to him for succour, the more importunate and fervent let our devotions arise be-

late discourses published by the present Bishop of London, which well merit the serious perusal of all Deists, Moralists, or whatever other name they deserve or bear, who reject the gospel of truth, and would make void that important article of faith, "*that there is none other name under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

fore him*—*Master, Master, we perish,—Lord, save or we perish;* thou alone art our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble—therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waves thereof roar and swell, though the mountains *shake with the swellings thereof.*

But so weak is our faith, and for the most part so imperfect our trust in God, that very few are able to ascend to this strong confidence: to this full dependance, and absolute resignation to the good will of God, in every danger and in every trial: human nature still will have its frail doubtings, some remains of the evil heart of unbelief will yet be found: what then, shall they be deprived of his help, and have no experience of his saving mercy, who are found deficient therein, and like Peter through distrust are sinking? For the comfort of such we have,

III. This example of the disciples, whom though Christ *rebuked* for their *fearfulness* and *weakness*, yet he *saved* them from the threatening danger.

He saith unto them, *why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Why are ye so fearful, how is it, that ye have no faith?* He doth not rebuke them for disturbing *him* with their prayers, but *themselves* with their own causeless fears. "*Why are ye fearful?*—Have I not proved myself the Son of God to you by many infallible signs; have I not done many mighty works, which no man could do, except God were with him, and are you afraid of perishing with ME; *have you no faith*, thus doubtful of my divine power, thus fearful that your Lord should perish with you in a storm— *how is it, that ye have no faith?*" For they indeed demonstrated

* See this exemplified in the following sermon on the *Faithful Canaanite.*

the greatest infirmity, nay, and even expostulated with their Lord in a manner highly blamable, "*Lord,* CAREST *thou not that we perish?*—hast thou no care, no regard at all for US, for US, who have left all and followed thee, and yet thou sleepest in the very extremity of peril, and hast no concern for thy disciples' safety?"—Christ reprehends this more than womanly fear, and pusillanimity, and hints that they, from his former words and works, ought to have made a greater progress in faith, and to have known that while he was present with them, they could never be harmed: let the seas roar, and the winds rage with all their united violence, while the Son of God was in their vessel, all was safe. And if Cæsar could say to the master and mariners, "Fear not you, you carry with you Cæsar and his fortune;" how much rather should they have reasoned, "we have no need of fear, we carry with us the Son of God; and under his almighty protection are secure from all dangers, from all storms and tempests, and every attack of the prince of the power of the air." *They* more especially should have reasoned thus, who were chosen by him for the very purpose of preaching and propagating this faith, through the world: of which they can be supposed to make but weak preachers, who themselves are strangers to it; but they improved indeed in this school, and under this divine Master; after whose death, and the gift of the blessed Spirit, we know, to our singular happiness, how mighty they were in the faith, what abundant fruits they brought forth, wherein we now rejoice, and how *faithful* they all of them were, *faithful* even *unto death!*—In their present state, however, we have a lively picture of the weakness of human nature, which was the same in the Apostles as in us, and in all mankind. Upon the least storm our inordinate fears and jealousies are apt to arise, so weak and wavering is our be-

lief, so apt are we to doubt of that love and power, which can never fail those, who humbly rely upon it. If therefore, like the disciples, we have been at any time apt to conceive high notions of our trust in God, let us learn from hence, never to be too secure: never to glory in the strength and stability of our faith: never to omit the due means, which may confirm and strengthen it in our hearts, and especially prayer, the word, and the Lord's supper: let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall; humility and utter renunciation of all self-confidence can alone guide our steps aright, and keep our feet from stumbling; for God's grace is given abundantly to the humble: and that alone can enable us to exert our sincere endeavours for the extirpation of those evil fears and doubtings, those base surmises, jealousies and misgivings of mind, which are apt to arise amidst dangers and ill-success; and we shall be the more enabled to do so, if we lay this as a corner-stone of our faith, that whatever our dangers or difficulties may be, God is superior to all, that if he be for us, nothing can be against us, and that he will evermore be for us, if we commit and commend ourselves, and all we have to him, perfectly satisfied and assured, that he will save us, as is most for his glory and our eternal good.

IV. Thus mixt and imperfect as was the faith of the disciples, yet for our comfort who labour under the like infirmity, Christ withdrew not his helping hand, but rebuking them for their unbelief, shewed his power for the future confirmation of their faith. He arose from his sleep, on the pillow where he lay in the hinder part of the vessel, the pilot's place, to intimate that he preserves and steers our vessel when winds and waves assault it, and it seems in the ut-

most peril,* though he may close his eyes he doth not close his heart; he may seem regardless, but it is only to quicken our prayer and make deliverance more welcome. Thus he did to his disciples: he arose with awful composure and serene majesty on his brow,——he arose at their prayer, and having first rebuked them for their unreasonable fears and base doubts,——He then *rebuked the Wind, and said unto the Sea, "Peace, be still:"*‖ *and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. When men cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he delivereth them out of their distress: he maketh the storm a calm: so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.* Mark how great and good a thing it is to fly to, and put our trust in that God, who when men cry, is ever ready to deliver! And what more signal proof could he give of his power to deliver?

* When winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it, he doth steer,
Even when the boat seems most to reel,
Storms are the triumph of his art;
Though he may close his eyes yet not his heart.

HERBERT.

This same divine poet, whose life was of a piece with his compositions, when he named the name of Christ, used to add *my Master*, and in one of his poems he thus expresses himself concerning it.

How sweetly doth *my Master* sound,
My Master!
As Ambergris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster,
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrancy, *my Master*.

‖ What grandeur and elegance is there in these two words, Σιωπα, πεφιμωσο, Christ doth indeed speak here *as one having authority*.

Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
Stood rul'd.

MILTON.

When was it ever heard, that a *word* of any man's, save the Son of God, was able to rebuke a roaring tempest, and to speak a raging ocean into peace? Who can controul these outrageous elements, which would mock at the opposition of united worlds, of all who, like mad Xerxes, would prepare their proud chains to fetter them? But Wind and Storm fulfil the great Redeemer's word: and *in a moment*,* the mighty billows that rose mountains high, the outrageous winds that blew with resistless fury, sink into a silver surface and hush into the deepest calm! —What an idea must this raise in all our minds of the power of the word of Christ, and the infinite happiness of those who believe in and rely upon that glorious word. Happy sailors, may we say, who put to sea with this almighty Lord of winds and waves in their vessel, with this almighty Saviour dwelling in their hearts! § Yea, rather, should we say, hap-

* *In a moment*—This circumstance (observes Mr. Hervey very justly) as much aggrandizing the miracle, is with great historical propriety, remarked by the Evangelist. The sea is known to have a prodigious *swell*, and very tremendous agitations, for a considerable time after the tempestuous wind ceases. But on this occasion, and in obedience to its MAKER'S will, it departs from the established laws of motion.—No sooner is the word spoken, but there is a *calm*: not an advancing, but an *instantaneous* calm: not a partial, but a *perfect* calm. *Theron* and *Aspasio*, vol. iii. p. 75. edit. 8vo. For a fine and picturesque description of this event, and some elegant criticisms, the reader is referred to the same work. Vol. i. p. 234.

§ For it is this Lord of winds and waves only, which can assist in the day of trouble, and one should think that the continued and experienced need of this aid should make sailors the most pious of all men! But, strange to think, how much superstition sways the minds of bigots,—while pure religion is neglected; though indeed it is less to be admired, when we consider the depraved and sensual nature of mankind. How can we but behold with pity the blind devotees of the church of Rome imploring their *Saints and wooden Gods* in times of danger at sea, and directing all their prayers to their several tutelar intercessors, while they forget the *Lord of power*; nay, and wonderful to tell, even *whip* severely their

py mortals, who are sailing over the ocean of this life safe under his convoy, and secure with Jesus lodging in the pilot's place! If he be with us, if he be for us, though storms descend, though tempests roar, though the whole frame of nature trembles, yet shall we have no cause of doubt or dread: he will vindicate our cause; he will hear our prayers: he who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, will arise and speak the commanding word, *Peace, be still.* But if we reject and blaspheme his offered mercy and power, great cause have we then to dread his avenging might; for if storms, and seas, and devils are rebuked by, and obedient to a *word* of his,—how shall a little dust and ashes, a shadow, a broken reed, a worm, a sinful son of woman be able to stand his indignation and wrath?—Awed by this consideration, let us unite all our efforts, and put forth the most earnest desires of our souls, to interest this *word* in our cause, and to engage this Lord on our side; so that he may speak peace to the storms and waves of our troubled souls; for he came into the world on purpose to compose storms, to proclaim peace on earth: and as this was his blessed purpose, we can never doubt, but that at our desire, he will command the outward as well as the inward enemies of our peace to be still, silence the roarings of a noisy world, the impetuous outrage of an infernal and inveterate enemy, and the boiling billows of our own corrupt passions and affection; that so there may

unworthy Saints, when they will not grant their petitions. If this be not heathenism and idolatry worse than that of Baal's priests, and of those who sailed with Jonah, *who cried every man unto his God,* it is difficult to say what is. *Ye British sailors,* let the integrity and honesty of your hearts and lives shew how much superior your holy faith is to this superstition, and then your glorious success from the Lord will abundantly prove how much superior he is to the whole army of Rome's *Saints,* to all her vain intercessors!

be calm, a calm, sweet and serene, a *peace passing all understanding*, which his powerful word only can produce, and in which by his heavenly guidance, our troubled vessel may happily be steered into the desired haven of eternal rest! And that omnipotent word of thine, adorable Lord Jesus, which spoke *peace* to the winds and sea, can as easily perform the like good work for our souls! O silence all our tempestuous passions, and reduce them to that desirable tranquillity, which alone can enable us to enjoy thee and ourselves! O may we all experience in our hearts the power of thy divine words,—*Peace, be still!* O that thou wouldst speak, and it should be done; command, and there should be a calm!

V. Thus our Lord manifested his power and mercy towards the disciples: the consequence of which one should have supposed, would have been perfect rejoicing and thanksgiving on their parts and full confession of their faith in him, as the Son of God, but *the Holy Ghost was not yet given.** And without the operations of divine grace on the heart, the most signal mercies or judgments do no more with men than they did with the disciples: we do not want many and remarkable instances of persons whose hearts, amidst the greatest manifestations of mercy to themselves, and of judgment upon others, have neither been melted by the one nor broken by the other into true repentance and faith; a proof and a caution how needful it is for us at all times to implore the grace of God, to convince, to soften, to remove the *stony* heart from our breasts.

The disciples† *feared exceedingly;* they *marvelled*

* Rather—*But the Holy Ghost was not yet*—ουπω γαρ ην πνευμα αγιον,—He had not yet assumed his office, the blessed third person in the trinity was not yet *the Holy Ghost, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* John vii. 39.

† I know it is the opinion of many learned expositors, that not

greatly, and said one to another, what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him? No wonder that they *marvelled:* here was cause sufficient, a *man* by a word rebuking the most dangerous storm and swelling sea, and in an instant commanding them into *peace.* And that they *feared* is less to be admired, when we consider their Lord's sharp rebuke of them, whose troubled passions, inordinate fears, and unreasonable doubts, had swelled in their breasts like the waves of the sea. And their fear in this respect was not to be condemned, as arising from the strong sense they had of their own weakness, unworthiness, and infinite distance from that almighty Lord, whom they trembled to offend, whose power they now contemplated with increased reverence, and whose goodness, as well as his greatness, godly fear led them to adore and dread.

And shall not we be taught by them to fear and dread this almighty and beneficent Saviour, when through unbelief and weakness we offend him?—— When we compare ourselves with his divine majesty, what weak and impotent creatures do we seem? To look at the sun shining in its splendour, and thence to carry our views to the bright Creator of this dazzling luminary, sinks us into worms indeed, and astonisheth us at the sight of our own littleness! Marvellous it is, that this *high and holy One* should regard us, much more marvellous that we should dare to offend him, but of all most marvellous, that the God of glory should have condescended to become the ransom of all our offences! And can we fail to implore his pardon, to be humbled under the sense of our own manifold impieties, and to take especial heed how we walk for the future, lest hap-

only the disciples were present in this ship, but many others also, however as the contrary opinion is as well supported, I have chosen that which seems to afford the best instruction.

ly we again offend the eyes of the heavenly majesty! The sense of our own vileness must necessarily lead us to this *godly fear;* next to which holy admiration and perpetual celebration of his goodness and mercy, in thus saving and redeeming us, should ever find a place in our hearts: and *wonder* should arise, to behold winds and storms obedient to his *word,* but man created after his image and similitude so loved, and bought with such a price, to see *man* alone regardless and unobserving of it!* This is of all wonders, the greatest! And let the disobedient soul consider, whether it be not worthy the highest astonishment, that irrational creatures should perform perfect obedience to their Creator, while *man,* proud and vain man, thinks it even a disgrace to be subject to his laws, a meanness to be conformed to the life of a suffering master! *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider!* Well might we say with the prophet, upon a view hereof, *O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Hear now this, O foolish people and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not! Fear ye not me, saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail: though they roar yet can they not*

* He that truly loves wealth, would be the richest, and he that loves honour would be the highest of any other; certainly grace is in itself more lovely than any of these things. Why then should not every man strive to be most unlike the evil world, and to be more excellent than his neighbour? to be holy as God is holy, to be as Christ himself was in this world, to grow up in unity of faith, and in the knowledge of him unto a perfect man? Bishop Reynolds on Psalm cx. p. 329.

pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, &c.

In truth great reason there is to fear him; and if we can be engaged neither by his power, nor mercy, to turn unto him, then when it is too late, we shall experience the want of, and fly to him for, his aid: and when our vessel is now sinking, when the waves of death are about to overwhelm us, and the terrors of hell make us afraid—alas, we have but too much reason to fear, that we shall perish unregarded of him, whom we have never regarded save in this last sad hour of extremity! May his grace so open all our eyes from this dangerous sleep of carnal security, that we may be sensible of a life of sin, and fly to Christ with a *Lord save, or we perish,* before *the water-floods overflow us, the deep swallow us up, and the pit shut,* for ever *shut her mouth upon us!*

Thus did our Saviour exercise the faith of his disciples; and manifest his own almighty power—that we also might be instructed from hence in these lessons: namely, that calamities and distresses are the lot of even the best of men, that the followers of Christ must be exercised in this school, and that perfect freedom from assaults, trials and temptations is what we are by no means to expect from our master, or to measure his love and favour by; since he frequently reduces his chosen servants even to the last extremity, for the more full confirmation of their faith in him, for their greater humiliation upon the sight and sense of their own weakness, and his omnipotence, and to teach them, that through *much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.*‖ It is our duty therefore by no means to des-

‖ The reader cannot be more edified, comforted and instructed

pair and despond, in the blackest night of affliction, when the waves and storms rage to the highest, but then to implore the divine mercy with the more ardent and importunate devotion, to silence all the fears and jealousies of evil, frail and doubting nature, and to repose our whole trust and confidence upon his saving arm: assured that be we never so unworthy, yet he is all-sufficient to help and deliver; be we never so weak and frail, yet if we have Christ in our vessels; if we have faith, however imperfect, he will at length awake and arise at our call and in his good time speak peace to the storm that endangers us. Thus fixing our eye of faith steadfastly on him, calamities may bend, but can never break us: in the end we shall weather out the storm, and be by him safely landed on the desired shore.

But these things pertain not only to individuals, but also to the church in general, whose condition in this world the ancient writers have observed, may beautifully be pictured out to us by this ship, wherein was *Christ and his Apostles.*

1. The vessel was one of no price, a fishing vessel of Peter's, as is generally supposed,* of no great value or estimation. So the church in the eyes of

upon this subject than by consulting *Thomas à Kempis,* chap. xii. book. ii.

* Erasmus has a very elaborate note on Matt. viii. 23, to shew and prove that πλοιον, is not of the same import with πλοιαριον, and so that this was not a little vessel, *navicula Petri*—but his annotation very little concerns the spiritual meaning. And as to the absurdity of the Roman Catholics, who have taken this vessel to themselves, and set the Pope at the helm, (to the exclusion of Jesus Christ from his government) together with the conclave of Cardinals, &c. for the rowers, and thrust out us Heretics and pirates to howl at them awhile and perish in the sea—we have nothing more to observe, than that it is good comfort, they can do this only in picture, nor ever shall do more; for the gates of hell shall never prevail against, so as utterly to destroy, the Church of Christ.—The poet Horace has a fine ode xiv. lib. I. wherein he compares the Roman state to a weather-beaten vessel.

the world, is but small and of no price, when compared to the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them. The prophet applies to it in these words *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted.* 2. In this ship, Christ embarked with these disciples, which followed him, leaving the proud Scribes, and the ungrateful Capernaum, to go to the other side of the lake: so he gathers his chosen and faithful followers into his church; who accompany their master through the ocean of this world, to the port of their eternal country, leaving all the proud and ungrateful lovers of this world behind. 3. Various storms and tempests, tides and commotions molest the sailors in their voyage over the ocean; so the wicked of this world, instigated, by the evil spirit and prince of it, *the prince of the power of the air*, by their own nature prone to evil, and by their corrupt affections averse to the true saints and servants of God, are continually raging against them, *foaming out their own shame, like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*, and as having no peace to themselves, so labouring to trouble the peace of others. *For there is no peace saith my God, to the wicked.* The devil never fails to promote and propagate their fury, especially when he beholds the church of Christ increasing upon earth, and carried by the divine breath of the holy Spirit, as it were with prosperous gales, across the deep.† Then he stirs up the raging tempests against it; inciting either bloody persecutors, cruel

† St. Chrysostom *in epist. ad Heb.* in a beautiful similitude, compares the soul under the happy guidance of God's good Spirit to a vessel sailing with prosperous wind and tide across the ocean. And he remarks finely that as the wind striking upon a loose sail, exerts no force, so neither doth the spirit bear to dwell in a remiss and negligent soul, requiring, on the contrary daily and instant diligence and assiduity, that we may perform acceptable works to God, &c.

tyrants, bold infidels, or seducing heretics, who by their wicked and impious devices either rend the church into sects and divisions, or endeavour utterly to sink it by blood and arms. 4. And this more particularly when Christ seems, as it were, to be asleep in the vessel, that is, when there are no outward and signal displays of his divine and avenging hand against the wicked; so that it may seem, as if he were by no means touched with any concern for his church. Then the infernal Leviathan maketh the *deep to boil like a pot—he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.* Examples hereof have been abundant in all ages: how was the church tossed like a ship in the old world, when the impious posterity of Cain, infested the children of God, and at length shut them up in the narrow confines of the *ark*, that eminent figure of the church. After the deluge the progeny and posterity of that persecuting infidel, Nimrod, no less troubled and vexed the holy patriarchs. Then in Ægypt this vessel was only not overwhelmed, when God awakened by the cries and groans of his people, saved it from the devouring waves by the hands of Moses and Aaron. Afterwards in the desert, and amongst the Canaanites, Philistines, Moabites, and various other enemies, how was it afflicted and tossed with tempests: till at last by the force of Assyria and Babylon, rushing violently upon it, it seemed to have perished wholly from the East. And in the *New Testament*, while Christ was present with it, and after his ascent into heaven the state of the church hath been little less quiet and calm: for the first three hundred years till the time of Constantine the Great, how was it vexed with numberless most violent storms from Jews and Gentiles, bloody and cruel persecutors: and afterwards what dangerous and boisterous hurricanes have been raised by the turbulent fury of a Mahomet, the persecuting spirit of popery, the bittesness

of heretics, and the blind rage of zealots, and enthusiasts!* Such hath been the case of the *church* in general, and if we look to that branch of it, established in this nation in particular, we shall find the prospect not much more serene: especially when from the days of Henry,‡ we cast our eyes through Mary's short but gloomy reign, the stormy times of unfortunate Charles, and the tempests rising under the hand of James, to the abounding iniquity, infidelity, lukewarmness, bigotry and divisions of the present hour!

And 5. These storms and troubles are suffered by Christ to arise in his church as well to punish the sinfulness of its false, as to prove the faith of its true members: *That the trial of their faith being found much more precious than of gold, that perisheth, though it he tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* Wherefore in all the churches, in dangers, the pious members thereof, like the disciples, should betake themselves to earnest prayer, and intreat their Lord to *save or they perish:* which if they do, the effect will be as it was in the present tempest: aroused by their prayers he will compose the storms and restore peace and tranquillity to his church:§ which however he is pleased to bring it

* The reader will find in Bossuet's Universal history, 2 Vols. *duodecimo*, the shortest and most comprehensive view of the progress of religion and the state of the church; and I know not any work which can be of greater use or is more proper to be read by young people in particular and by all in general, who desire a succinct and accurate idea of the state of religion and empires.

‡ The Eighth.

§ St. Cyrill of Alexandria observes, that as by the *sea* in this place, the *world* may be understood, so by the ship, the *church:* against which innumerable troubles and temptations are raised by the malice of the infernal spirits, so as even to bring it into the utmost danger, with which Christ though he may seem to sleep, will yet always be truly present—and when called upon by his faithful people in their extremity, he will arise without delay, and

about, should fill his faithful servants with holy admiration and godly fear: causing them to reverence and acknowledge his power and goodness, and to take especial heed that they so walk before him, as to shew themselves truly sensible of his mercies.

But in the present posture of affairs,† every member of our church, every faithful subject, and true lover of his country, is in an especial manner, called upon to invoke the aid and implore the almighty power of our Lord, in defence of our church and state; now when subtile France, backed by the counsels and encouragements of blood-thirsty Rome, is devising our overthrow, and meditating

deliver them from all their fear; and will punish those that trouble them and turn their heaviness into joy, restoring peace and tranquillity: for he will by no means despise those who trust in him.—The same father, has another very particular explanation of this history. "The present event, saith he, was a figure of those things, which afterwards were to befal the disciples. For this *Lake* unto which Christ ascended, was a figure of Judea: a storm and great tempest was raised there against him by the fury of the Jews: his disciples were so troubled thereat, as to farsake him and fly from him: but the Saviour arose as it were from sleep, and the disciples were again reconciled. For the master coming and standing in the midst said, *peace be unto you.* St. Jerom has a remark also something of this nature, *hujus signi typum in Jona legimus, quando ceteris periclitantibus ipse securus est & dormit & suscitatur &* imperio ac sacramento passionis *suæ liberat suscitantes.*—St. Chrysostom upon Matthew hath an elegant and fine comparison of human life, to a voyage over the ocean, which is too long for this place.

† In his majesty's most gracious proclamation for the *fast* we read, Whereas the present situation of public affairs (as to the issue of them) is of the greatest importance to the peace and safety of these kingdoms, to our commerce and liberties, and above all to the *most valuable blessings of the protestant religion,* &c.—For the true spirit of the Roman Catholic religion we refer the reader by all means to a *breve* of Pope Urban the VIII. sent to Lewis the XIII. king of France, upon his taking of Rochelle, and to Bishop Hall's incomparable answer, which are found at the end of the second volume of that writer's works, and well deserve the perusal of every Englishman.

with black envy and revenge, the total subversion of our happy constitution! But *the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge:* we trust he hath recorded the many ardent vows of his people offered on the day of public *humiliation*, a day, in which every serious Christian must rejoice. That we may truly reap the benefits of it, and still be confident under his protection, who is a *man of war:* let us be careful to walk as becometh his servants, as becometh the purity of that religion we profess, and the numberless benefits which we of this church and nation enjoy above all the people upon earth.

This indeed is a lesson for us all, not only at present, but at all times; not only in times of public danger, but of deepest tranquillity: for we are all embarked on the ocean of this life, and this, wherein the apostles are represented to us, is the fearful and dangerous condition of every man, to whose soul Christ hath not yet said *peace*. The winds and storms of the world and Satan, are continually blowing up and fermenting the troubled waves of his corrupt and boiling passions: he is tossed to and fro, blown about with a variety of evils and troubles, beset on all hands, covered with the waves of worldly cares and fears, *those waters that come in, even unto the soul, those deep waters, whose floods will overflow him*, and now is he about to *sink*, now ready to perish; in a moment, perhaps to be overwhelmed with the floods of present and eternal death, unless he cry aloud to the God of power, unless he implore the almighty Redeemer to save.—Look through the world, and you will see numberless proofs of the violence of these inward and outward storms: *The wicked*, we are told, *are like the waves of the troubled sea which cannot rest; they are like raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame*. Look how restless a body the ocean is, in

continual flux and reflux, vexed with perpetual storms, in constant agitation, and casting forth infinite filth and mire—just such is the state of the impious and depraved part of mankind, who are in perpetual uneasiness and disquietude, changing and changed, hating and hated, condemning and condemned, tost about by divers passions, very slaves to the caprice of fashion, times and vices, sending forth the filthy mire of iniquity, in everlasting perturbation; and at the very best, in the sunshine of their joy, without any true peace, any real substantial happiness, subject to innumerable real and imaginary ills, which joined to the inward troubles and torments of their own consciences can be so fully represented by nothing as an ocean vexed with a thousand storms. This is the prospect if we look outward to the great world; and if you look inward to the little world in your own hearts, you will soon see the immediate resemblance, if yet strangers to Christ and the gospel of his power; the perplexities anxieties, troubles, temptations, passions, desires, &c. continually striving there, will leave you no room to doubt of the exactness of this copy to which the original in your breasts so exactly corresponds.—And if any of you here present are in this miserable state, O bethink you of the danger, and dreadful consequences of it: surely you cannot then be content to remain and perish in it: you cannot then be content to lull your consciences asleep, and while the ship is sinking, fancy yourselves in the most safe and pleasing calm!—Were you really in the case of the disciples, out at sea; were your vessel, after having long withstood them, unable any longer to support the violence of winds and waves, were it now filling every moment more and more, were you expecting every instant to plunge down into the great deep; O how would you cry unto the Lord, how would you all fall on your knees and implore his

mercy; how fervent, earnest, and lively, would your prayers ascend before God.—How is it then, *that ye have no faith?* How is it, O ye careless, formal, unregenerate Christians, how is it that you do not see your souls in equal, yea in far greater danger—in such a state, yea, in a state far more terrible than this! How is it that you are so regardless and remiss, when a life of sin every moment subjects you to perils infinitely more fearful infinitely more destructive than these? *There is no peace to the wicked;* if sin and Satan and the world have possession of your heart, do not deceive yourselves: your danger is imminent, all hope is delusive: the storms are raging against you; the waves are breaking in upon you: your ship is filling: every means of safety is vanishing: you are on the brink of perishing: though you ply every oar, stretch every cable, and work every pump, you can never save your vessel, you can never gain the shore; no human means can save you, all the schemes and devices of men, all the fine-spun systems of morality, all self-dependance is but as a thread of the spider's web; you must down to the fathomless deep, if leaning upon these you must make a fearful plunge into the eternal and unknown world!—And say, doth not that view alarm your heart? would you wish to perish, perish for ever in your sins, and appear thus worthless and self-condemned before a just and impartial judge?—O let the sense of this danger arouse your sleeping consciences: nay, and over and above the common calls, the common motives to your souls eternal care, do not the awful judgments of the Lord cause your stout hearts to tremble, and to meditate upon the means of safety: should almighty vengeance stir up the powers of nature against you, should he display his terrors to you as to the inhabitants of Lisbon, where would you fly, whither would ye run for succour? In a day like that, the vanity of all human

dependance would compel your affrighted souls to the prayers of anguish and terror; Oh how much happier would it be, if the report of such a day would melt your hearts into the prayer of repentance and love! For certain it is, should almighty goodness preserve our land and us from such horrible ruin,—yet we must all be present at a day and time, when even that ruin, though dreadful beyond apprehension, will appear but small: when the trumpet shall sound, the whole frame of nature tremble, the rocks melt, the earth dissolve, the heavens pass away with insufferable noise, and the dread Judge with ten thousand of thousands of saints shall come arrayed in terrible majesty to judge every soul amongst us! At this day we must all and each one of us be present: and if the storms of sin and Satan have never been calmed in our souls by his powerful *word*, that *word* will raise them to an endless intolerable degree, and all hopes of peace will be cut off throughout eternity!—

Oh that these reflections, my dearly beloved brethren, would persuade you to make this Judge your friend: now to sue to him ere it be too late, ere the waves and storms overflow your soul, ere they utterly sink your hapless vessel—for there is yet one place of refuge: the means of safety are still in your power: one arm, and one arm only, and that nothing less than an *omnipotent* one, can save your sinking vessel,—can preserve you from the day of desolation: Cry to Christ in your distress, beseech him, with David, *to send his hand from above, to rid and deliver you out of the great waters, and from the hand of strange children: beseech the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God for he*

will abundantly pardon: Let him cry, *Lord save or I perish,* and he who desireth not the death of a sinner, will arise and speak the word, *peace, be still,* the wind shall cease, and there shall be a great calm.

All is safe if you can but see and be sensible of your danger: be you never so unworthy, your Lord is able and willing to save all that cry unto him for relief; "far more ready to hear than we to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve:" thou, therefore, O Christian, who perceivest the stormy and tempestuous state of thy soul, calm thy fears and apply to thy Lord; be assured that his power is ever ready to be exerted on thy behalf; sue to him with earnest, fervent, and importunate prayer; beg like one that is soliciting for life: urge the Father to pity, by all the sufferings of the Son of his love; plead to the Son his bloody sweat, his cross and passion, and all his unspeakable agonies endured for thee; and nothing doubt, that he will ever cast thee out, that he will ever reject thy humble petition: but rest assured, that thy Lord will arise, *draw thee out of many waters, deliver thee from thy strong enemies,* and bring thee safe to the haven, where thou wouldst be!—And when thus experiencing his love and power, see that thy future life be dedicated wholly to his honour and praise; and let it be thy business so to thank him with thy life, as well as thy lips, that men may hear, observe, and be provoked to the same love and thankfulness; and unite their acclaiming voices with thine, saying, *O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men? Amen.*

DISCOURSE IX.

THE MAN DISPOSSESSED OF THE LEGION.

PART I.

LUKE vii. 27, 28.

And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city, a certain man which had Devils long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice, said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not.

WE have no less melancholy a proof of the power and tyranny of Satan over men, in the person here mentioned by the Evangelist, than in those daring infidels who have presumed to vent their crude and undigested objections against this miracle, and the divine author of it. As the one could be bound by no fetters or chains, neither could any man tame him; so neither can the other be restrained by reason or revelation, nay, or by the established laws of their country, from *casting* about their *fire-*

brands, arrows and *death*, to their own harm, the great terror and injury of others; *cutting themselves, and dwelling in the tombs exceeding fierce, so that no man can pass by that way.* It is difficult to convince such persons of a *spiritual* possession; or so to bring them to their *right* mind, as to teach them to *sit at the feet of Jesus*, and to learn in humility of him. This is the work of him only who could say, *Come out of the Man, thou unclean Spirit*: and that he would so say to all in this unhappy case, our fervent prayers to the throne of grace should never be wanting; while for ourselves, from examples of this sort, we learn an humble submission to the revealed will of God; and as perfectly satisfied, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, declared so to be with power, according to the spirit of *holiness by the* RESURRECTION *from the dead*, we shall from thence fully be assured, that *no man could do the miracles, which he did, except God were with him*, that *they bear witness of him that he was sent of God*, and of consequence demands our faith and obedience; and that, if in any of those works, there may appear aught difficult to our notions, or superior to our comprehensions, we may be certain, they were done in *truth*, in *wisdom*, and *equity;* and that it is our highest *wisdom* to make the best improvement of them we can, in humble adoration of the Almighty hand, who wrought them; always remembering, that there is a wide difference between our comprehending a thing and its not being to be comprehended, between a matter being wise, right and reasonable, and our not being able to see the wisdom and rectitude of it; a truth which in the dispensations of providence, we must if we will open our eyes, every day confess and admire.

With this view I shall recommend the present miracle of our Lord's to your attention, designing to give you in brief as plain and clear an ac-

count of the literal story, as may be, to which I am convinced no reasonable man, much less a believer in Jesus, can have aught to object; which done, I will dwell, and that more particularly, upon the spiritual use and improvement, which if we are sincere and desirous of it, we may each one derive from hence to our own souls; for to humble and sincere desire our bountiful Lord never yet denied his favour.

Christ had no sooner delivered his disciples from one danger, and displayed his divine power over the winds and waves for the confirmation of their faith, in him, than new perils alarmed them; soon as they were come to the other side of the sea and arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, a fearful object, full of terror, presented itself to their view! There met him out of the city a certain man, which had been possessed with devils a long time: who wore no clothes, neither abode in any house; but had his dwelling among the tombs, (which according to the custom of the country, were hewn out of the rocks and mountains, that were near the city;*) in these, with another of the same condition, (for St. Matthew speaks of two:‖) he made his horrible abode, so exceeding fierce, that no man could pass by that way. No compassion to the man, nor labours for their own security had been wanting in the people of the place;† for they had

* See page 126, *Note.*

‖ St. Mark and St. Luke speak only of one, who probably was the more fierce and remarkable: I have therefore chosen rather for the greater perspicuity to speak of *one* only; not that the truth of the history is in the least affected either way.

† It is astonishing that Woolston should raise this as an objection against the present miracle, asking, with much seeming commiseration, *why these wretches, the Demoniacs, were not taken care of?* when it is so plain from the history that all possible care had been taken of them; and to shew himself not so compassionate as the Gadarenes, he afterwards wonders, that *to prevent danger, they had not dispatched them, which he asserts to have been lawful.* But, *Nil fuit unquam tam dispar sibi!*

ofttimes endeavoured to confine him; but no man could bind him, no not with chains, because though he had been frequently so bound, the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him. And always, day and night, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, driven thither amidst those melancholy receptacles of the dead, and into a wild howling wilderness, near at hand, by the devil: where he continued crying out day and night in a terrible manner, cutting himself with the stones, and exercising his hard master's tyranny upon his own mangled limbs.

When he beheld Jesus afar off, an object hateful to his eyes, and sore against his will, by his overruling power was dragged into his divine presence, he ran, and fell down before him and worshipped him, terrified at his presence and trembling through dread of his power: and so much the more as the devil perceived that power about to be exerted in behalf of the wretched man, thus possessed and miserably tormented by him; towards whom Jesus was moved with his usual compassion, and had already commanded the *unclean spirit* to come out of him; who upon hearing that awful voice which shall one day sentence him, and *all his rebellious** to irrecoverable woe, cried out, through the organs of the man, with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. Art *thou* come hither to torment *us before* the *time?*"—Upon which, for the more full display of his own divine power, and for the manifestation of the number and tyranny of these evils spirits, Jesus inquired of him, saying, What is thy name? And he answered, My

* Such place eternal justice had prepar'd
For those Rebellious. MILTON, B. I. Ver. 70.

name is LEGION: because many devils were entered into the man—Horrible to think, a Legion of evils spirits to possess and torment one soul!—Finding they had no hope to maintain their present habitation, they now become petitioners to Christ, but like their nature only for evil. They besought him, that he would not send them away out of the country, hoping still for some future means of evil, some opportunity to hurt the progress of the gospel; nor command them to go into the great *deep, the bottomless pit,** the place of their final doom, where they must be bound for ever, and whence they must never return.

Now there was a good way off from them, nigh unto the mountains, an herd of many swine feeding; and all the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to enter into the herd of swine. For they well knew, as they were prohibited by the laws of God and of man, so they were a just forfeiture to both:† and they hoped, that by doing this damage to the possessions of men, they should tempt them to the greater sin, in being angry at

* Rev. xx. 3. Milton, speaking of the fall of Satan and the rebellious angels into this great deep, is truly admirable—

> ——Him the Almighty power
> Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' etherial sky,
> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
> In adamantine chains, and penal fire,
> *Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms?*
> Nine times the space that measures day and night,
> To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
> Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery gulf,
> Confounded tho' immortal. Book I. Ver. 44.

†-This will be shewn more fully in the sequel of this discourse, supplying the infidel objector with a sufficient answer to his question, "what right Jesus had thus to destroy these swine?" And, I trust, it will be made fully appear, that it was at once consistent with his *goodness* and *justice*.

and rejecting the seeming author of this mischief to them. Jesus therefore suffered them; he gave them leave; for without his permission all the armies of hell cannot hurt a hair of our heads; partly to punish these transgressors of the Law; to try the Gadarenes; to convince the sceptical unbelievers of those, as well as of ours, and of all times, of the reality of spiritual agency: and to shew the odious malice and propension to evil of these spirits; who immediately, upon his permission, went out of the man, and entered into the herd of swine. And, behold the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (which no human power, had there not been a real spiritual agency, could have caused them to do,) were choaked in the waters, and perished to the number of about two thousand! The event was as unhappy to his countrymen, as it was happy to the man possessed with the Legion; they upon the report of what was done, from those that kept the swine, came out to see Jesus; upon the sight of whom, with their countrymen, sitting at his feet, and upon full information of what had happened, they were taken with so strange and perverse a fear, as to dread his power, and be afraid of his judgments, rather than implore his mercy, and thank him for the benefits done to their countryman and their country, delivered from so dangerous an inhabitant. On the contrary, they desired to be rid of him, and jointly prayed him to depart out of their coasts. While the man, who was rescued from the tyranny of Satan, who sat at the feet of Jesus clothed, and in his right mind, perceiving that he was about to depart, as the Gadarenes desired, prayed him, that he at least might have leave to continue with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things God hath done unto thee.

Accordingly he went his way, and published through the whole city, and throughout all Decapolis how great things Jesus* had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Thus stands the literal story, an invincible evidence, that these Demoniacs were not as some have fondly supposed,† only lunatics or epileptics, but

* The reader cannot but observe, how strong a proof of the divinity of Jesus is given in these words of the sacred writers; the person is ordered to go and tell what great things *God* had done for him—he obeys and tells aloud what great things Jesus had done for him—He therefore must be an inattentive reader of scripture who doth not see that *God* and *Jesus* are applied to the same person. *Jesus* therefore is *God*. See St. Luke viii. 39.

† Our learned Joseph Mede hath fallen into this opinion, see his works, p. 28, &c. which hath lately been revived and fully confuted. There is a plain distinction made, Matt. iv. 24, between Lunatics and those possessed with devils. I cannot omit quoting a passage here from the present bishop of Bangor's *Vindication* of the miracles of Jesus, which though long, will well repay my trouble in transcribing, and be, I doubt not, very satisfactory to my reader. Part ii. p 28. "In the instance of this miracle before us, we find that the devils spake out of the possessed persons, they were sent out of them, and they entered into the herd of swine: personal actions as well as speeches are ascribed to them, which can never be ascribed to mere phrenzy and madness, for had there been nothing more than madness, when it ceased in the men it would have had then no influence on the swine: whereas that which went out of the one, and entered into the other must have had a distinct being and existence of its own. This therefore is the true Gospel notion of Demoniacs, they were not madmen only, but they were possessed of unclean spirits; and if Jesus be proved to have come from God he could not have been unacquainted with the immaterial world, and therefore no one can reasonably refuse to believe the account which he hath given us of the operations of evil spirits upon human bodies. Had no authors but the sacred ones made mention of the Demoniacs, of those days yet the Scripture testimony would have been sufficient. But there are unquestionable authors which agree in this story, and speak of possessed persons as no uncommon sight in their days. Josephus says that Solomon had from God, the art of casting devils out of men and healing them; and that he composed charms for assuaging the disease, and left behind him forms of adjuration, by which the devils were so effectually cast out as never to return again; and he adds, that this way of healing was practised among his countrymen even down to his own days. Whether the Jews

real possessions: their personal actions and entrance into the swine abundantly prove it, were there no other proofs; but the scriptures all through as well as Heathen writers, join in the testimony: and indeed the present miracle seems in a great measure designed to confute any such erroneous opinions, and to convince us of the reality of spiritual agency.

Why such instances were so frequent at or about the time of our Saviour's coming, and perhaps more especially in and about the place of his destined ministry—though we may not be able to see all the reasons, yet it seems probable, that as the great end of his incarnation was *to destroy the works of the devil, to enter into the strong man's house, to bind him and spoil his goods;* therefore the wise disposer of all events, might permit the devil to exert himself and to display his tyranny in an unusual manner, that he might be the more signally and manifestly

had so effectual a method of dispossessing men as Josephus thought, yet thus much appears plainly from his testimony, that there were persons possessed with devils in his days, and long before; nay, he tells us in the same place that he saw one dispossessed in the presence of the Emperor Vespasian and his family; and to prevent our mistaking this calamity for madness or any other common and natural distemper he explains what he means by being possessed with devils, when he says, that what were called so, were the spirits of wicked men, which entered into living persons, and occasioned the death of such of them as met with no help. Plutarch and Lucian mention Demoniacs as well known in their days; and Philostratus in his life of Apollonius among the miraculous cures which he ascribes to him, has a particular account of a young man who had an unclean spirit, which made him wander from home, and led him into the desolate parts of the country amidst deep vallies and precipices. Where the reader may observe, that the same circumstances are said to have attended this young man as the madmen in the gospels: and whatever was the truth of the fact reported by Philostratus, yet it shews both his opinion that there were Demoniacs at that time, and that the effects of such possession were commonly the same as the evangelists represent them.

triumphed over by the Saviour of the world, the *bruiser of the serpent's head,* and by those, who were delegated by him to propagate his faith, and who had received it in commission to cast out devils.

Why such Demoniacs were suffered at all, these reasons are offered,

1st, To confirm us in our belief of the reality of the agency of good and bad spirits: and to convince us of the divine power of Christ, whose word they hear and obey with terrible confusion.

2d, To exercise the patience and increase the reward of those who are at any time tried by these and the like temptations of Satan, as in the case of Job.

3d, To convince unbelievers what blackness of darkness, what horrors and punishment remain for those, who shall be wholly given up to the power of these evil spirits, and the severe tortures, which they, who are such deadly enemies to men, will then inflict upon them; if now they drive them into the tombs and deserts, cause them to howl away in miserable lamentation, days and nights: to cut and mangle themselves with the rocks and stones;—if now they cause them to fall down into the fire or water, to foam at the mouth and to gnash with the teeth, what will they do when they get miserable and condemned souls into their whole and entire possession!—Oh this should stir us up to shake off their chains and fetters, and to sit at the feet of Jesus clothed, and in our right mind. And a

4th Reason alleged for these corporeal possessions, is, that they were suffered in order to shew us, what the devil doth with the soul spiritually possessed and enslaved by him and sin. For as Satan when he possesseth the body, makes one blind, another deaf, another dumb, and another void of all sense; so in whatsoever souls he reigns through

sin, he deprives them of all spiritual senses, and renders them blind, deaf, and dumb to whatever concerns their great, their eternal welfare. A consideration which should incline all such to hasten to Christ if they would escape those everlasting flames prepared for the devil and his angels. To avoid which, nothing will conduce more, than a careful survey, 1st, of the malice, and tyranny of the devil, as set forth in this notable event, and mighty miracle wrought by our Lord; whose power and compassion to deliver us herefrom; if, 2dly, we properly apply to ourselves; we shall be brought, 3dly, to that state of gratitude, that life of thanksgiving, of which we have an eminent example in the man thus dispossessed of the Legion, and which is finely contrasted by the different conduct of the herdsmen and Gadarenes.

I. First then let us take a view of the inveterate malice and tyranny of the old serpent, as manifested in this history.

1. The Sadducees denied the existence of any spiritual beings, *angel*, or *spirit*,* good or bad; the Pharisees, though they confessed both, like many now a days, had no great dread of their power, or opinion of their virtue. To convince the one of the utter falsehood of their opinion, and to shew the other, that Satan was not so contemptible an adversary, but a *strong man* indeed, this instance by divine providence was offered to our Lord, and by him to the diligent attention of his disciples and followers: that they might have a sensible proof, and so not fail to proclaim the tyranny and malice of

* Acts xxiii. 8. It appears to me at present, that this is the true meaning of the words, which seem not, as some very learned men have supposed, at least in my judgment to be referred to Christ, and the Holy Spirit—μητε αγγελον, μητε πνευμα, but the length of the former note prevents my saying more.

that *evil spirit, called the devil and Satan,* who thus in contempt of the Creator, and to enhance his own condemnation, had rendered a creature, made in the image of God, and designed for a temple of the Holy Ghost, a *cage of unclean birds,* an habitation of an immense number, a *Legion* of devils: for upon our Saviour's asking their name, the devils, who had possessed the man, so called themselves; and for this reason they add—*because we are many.* A Roman Legion at that time consisted of upwards of six thousand; but it does not follow from thence, that this was the exact number of the devils, only that there were *many* of them: and that they assumed this name as well for terror (a Roman Legion being now in those parts a very formidable name) as in opposition to the Almighty, who hath also a name of war, *the Lord of hosts,* nay, and who is a *man of war,** commanding all the armies of heaven, of earth, and of hell. And as this name particularly belonged to the Messiah, the Son of God, therefore the devil, his inveterate foe, assumed to himself also a military name; arrogantly intimating thereby, that he would not yield, but hold out in defence of his kingdom, and wage war with his infernal host, against the triumphant Michael, and all the armies of heaven. A lesson for us, under whose banner we should list, since it is necessary that we be engaged, since we must fight the Lord's, or the old serpent's battles: and again, on whose might we should rely, seeing *we fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places:* against Legions of enemies; for it is a fearful consideration, that if so many go to the possession of

* Exod. xv. 3.

one man, what numbers there must be traversing this lower world, and *seeking whom they may devour.* Be assured, Christian, thou shalt never want enemies to engage, and powerful ones too,—united in one common hatred, banded in one common conspiracy to destroy thy soul, and drag it with them into the bottomless pit.—Great need therefore there is, that we put on the whole armour of God, which is proof against all the fiery darts of the enemy, and clad in which we shall go on conquering and to conquer, singing this triumphant prelude to victory, "*In all* these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us:" through him though every devil were multiplied into a Legion, we need fear no evil—since if the Lord of hosts be for us, *who can be against us*—if he who can cause them to depart at a word be on our side, we have no reason to dread what the malice of all the powers of darkness can invent against us!

2. This Legion of evil spirits having thus possessed the man, they compelled him either to throw off or furiously tear in pieces the garments wherewith he was clothed, and thus to run about naked without any covering; which was done in contempt of God, who created the first pair naked: and when they were so, and not ashamed,* we see them in their state of innocence, unacquainted with sin, and so strangers to shame. But now, fallen as we are from that blissful state, clothes are a witness to and a covering of our shame. This man therefore thus stript by the power of indwelling spirits, moved neither by shame nor the inclemency of the weather, stood a sad object of proud Satan's scorn, and

* Gen. ii. 25. This is generally and very justly used as an argument against that pride and excess in clothing and outward ornaments, which reminding us of our fall, should rather *humble* than *elate* us.

a melancholy proof of the consequence of sin, and the nakedness of the soul.

3. So exceeding fierce was he, that he could be bound by no chains, tamed by no man, and by none restrained from flying to dwell amongst the tombs and deserts; thither he was driven by the devil, forcibly compelled thither by him, for the great horror of the place, for the better torturing of his body, for the avoiding the sight and the association of men, lest by their prayers and compassion this miserable object might be rescued from his grievous malice.* For it is the property of sin, to break all restrains of God, of men, and of laws: to fly the resort of men, to *love darkness rather than light*, to *walk through dry places seeking rest:* such *wildernesses* are the proper scenes for his tyranny: in one of them he attacked our blessed Lord himself, who came into this world to combat and to conquer, and who alone was able to bind this *strong man*, in chains of ever-during iron. "Solitary deserts are the delights of Satan: it is an unwise zeal (says Bishop Hall) which moves us to do that to ourselves which the devil wishes to do to us for a punishment and conveniency of temptation. The evil

* Grotius supposes, that the Demons chose to drive the men that they *possessed* among the *tombs*, to confirm some superstitious notions of the Jews, relating to the power of evil spirits over the dead. The Heathens, says Doddridge, had undoubtedly such notions; but I rather think with Elsner, the demoniacs chose the caves of this burying ground, as a kind of shelter, and he has shewn that wretches in extremity sometimes did the like. Elsner's Obs. vol. 1. p. 66—68. The Bishop of Bangor observing the nature of the Jewish sepulchres, that they were a kind of caves cut in the sides of rocks and mountains, adds, that these mountains might have afforded the madmen not only shelter but food, —John the Baptist, lived in the *wilderness* on *locusts* and wild honey; and Josephus in his own life tells us, that when young he went out into the wilderness to be instructed by one Banus, who *lived there upon what grew wild and without culture*, p. 21.

spirit is for solitariness: God is for society: he dwells in the assembly of his saints, yea, there he hath a delight to dwell; why should we not account it our happiness, that we may have leave to dwell there, where the author of all happiness loves to dwell?"

4. Thus miserably naked and exceeding fierce, breaking all bonds and fetters in pieces, and dwelling in the tombs and deserts amidst horror, from the resort of men, it is moreover added, as a further circumstance of the devil's tyranny, that always night and day, he continued lamentably crying out, and cutting himself against the rocks, and with the stones found there: thus giving up his members as arms to the devil, and instruments against himself, like the miserably deluded votaries of the same infernal power, whom they worshipped under the name of Baal: and invocating whose aid, we are told, *they cried out and cut themselves after their manner, with knives, and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.* For the devil will leave no means untried to make a man, the instrument of his own destruction; as we see in the case of the unhappy youth in the Gospel, whom (as his father informed our Lord) he had often cast into the fire and into the water to *destroy him.*

But the wretched man here under consideration was, by his impulse, so exceeding fierce, that no man could pass by that way: not only *fierce*, χαλεπος, but *mischievous*, insomuch that it was dangerous for any one to travel near that place, lest this demoniac should *leap* upon them, as that mentioned in the Acts, did upon the seven sons of Sceva the Jew, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house *naked and wounded.*

Hence then we have a display of the tyranny and power of the devil more fully than in any other part

part of the sacred scriptures, hence we see that so deadly and bitter an enemy he is to the human race, that if he can possess even one single man with a *Legion* of evil spirits, if he can make him a *shame* and *reproach* to the rest of men, or drive him from their *resort* and *company*, if he can *cut* and *mangle* his body, *distress* and imprison his soul, cast him into a thousand dangers, and hurt him in every respect, it is the greatest joy and satisfaction to his malicious and diabolical desires! Oh would sinners but from hence consider what a *master* they serve, and what are the wages, which he will give, how would they tremble under his yoke, how would they fly and hasten to accept redemption!—His obstinate maliciousness is moreover seen in this, that when dragged by the divine power to Christ, as to a tribunal, and when understanding, that he was the *judge* to condemn him, the *promised seed, that should bruise his* accursed *head*—He refuses to yield willingly, but as if Christ would do him an injury by driving him out before his time, he *adjures* him by GOD—*I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not*—by driving me out of this man, whom I justly possess on account of sin, by sending me out of this country! How horrible is this adjuration! How execrable his device!—so opposing the Son of God, as to *adjure* him by *God*, as if there was any other God, any other Judge eternal, than this same Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," God equal with the Father, and the eternal Spirit, who *is in the Father, and the Father in him, and whom whosoever hath seen, hath seen the Father also.*

But this infernal spirit leaves the dwelling which he had long possessed with indignant reluctance: and finding that to contend was fruitless, he en-

treats to have leave to enter into the herd of swine, that if he could not injure men themselves, he might however injure their property: and so irritate and provoke them to sin, through discontent and impatience, and to a dislike and rejection of Christ the Saviour of the world, on account of their loss: as we read in the history of Job, about whom the Lord so *made an hedge,* that Satan could have no power over his person: yet by God's sufferance he slew his cattle, and his children, in which the blow was aimed wholly at him, that he might be tempted to discontent and impatience, and to curse God to his face. " There is no affliction, wherein Satan doth not strike at the heart, which whilst it holds free all other damages are light, but a wounded spirit, with sin or sorrow, who can bear? Whatever becomes of goods or limbs, happy are we, if like wise soldiers we guard the vital parts: while the soul is kept free from impatience, from distrust, our enemy may afflict us, he cannot harm us."

This first part of the present miracle thus pointing out the malice, love of evil, tyranny, and power of the devil, we may oppose to the loose scoffs, and recommend to the serious attention of those infidels and thoughtless sinners, who like the Pharisees and Sadducees of old, when exhorted from sin through dread of Satan's power and the miseries of hell, make a mock both at the one and the other, esteeming each the bug-bear of nurses, and the device of priests to keep a foolish world in awe. They for their parts have too acute understandings, and too penetrating geniuses to believe aught of the flames of hell, or the malice of its prince, whom they fancy a more *mild* and *good-natured* governor than the present miracle gives us *some reason* to suppose he is. Would they seriously attend to the miserable spectacle, which this gospel presents to our view naked, dwelling in tombs, crying out day and night,

cutting himself with stones, furious, fierce, destructive, surely their scoffs, and idle mockery, would be changed into compassion and earnest heed to themselves. But if they will not do this, if they will still deride, and still disbelieve, let them have patience but a little while, alas they know not how little—and presently to their eternal loss will they dreadfully experience, how great is the tyranny, how bitter the malice of this prince of darkness against the souls of men!—which, God grant, the timely repentance and reformation of all such may prevent.

Hence too we may fully learn how miserable and wretched their condition is, in whose souls the devil obtains a spiritual command. For what doth a rebellious man alienated from the life of God, who *being past feeling hath given himself over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*, who suffers all his evil and corrupt affections and desires, to run riot and unrestrained in every iniquity, what doth such a one differ from this man *possessed with devils?* Such miserable sinners, first cast away that pure and white robe wherewith Christ after the fall would now in baptism clothe and adorn them: and though they do indeed walk about covered with outward garments, yet they want the *inward clothing*, that which is the true ornament and glory of man. They are *naked* it is true, but yet *not ashamed;* for having cast away all shame they regard no law nor restraint, so be they may but satisfy "their carnal lusts and filthy appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding." Nay, some arrive at even such a height of madness and impudence, as even to *glory* in their sins, in the face of the sun, to make a gain of them, nay, and to *live* by them! who can be looked upon only as a number of unfortunate human creatures, *possessed*

with devils, and by *them* driven on to whoredom, intemperance, drunkenness, extortion, rapine, murders, pride, envyings, and all the raging madness of every iniquity: which many think not enough to practise, but—shame to tell, and almost impossible to believe—some there are so abandoned as even to boast of their vices, nay, and with diabolical delusion, even to exaggerate their own offences,* as if there were a merit in defying the God of heaven, in challenging, like the master† they serve, *the Omnipotent himself to arms,* and an honour in perpetrating the most flagrant offences! Oh, 'tis a bad sign to talk of with pleasure, or to hear with approbation the foul and odious tales of iniquitous and debauched sinners!

But if any would endeavour to restrain the licentiousness of such, and reduce them into order by the bonds of godly discipline, then, as if agitated with new fury, they break asunder all the fetters of divine and human laws. They will not be subject to God nor obey the hated laws of Christ—they, as contemners of all religious restraint, cry out, *let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. We are they that ought to speak, who is Lord over us?* And who can bind, what man can tame such? The bonds wherewith they ought to be restrained, are the fear of judgment, the terrors of the law, the condemnation and censures of mankind, the exhortation of friends, the prayers and entrea-

* What the poet says of one sort of sinners, may well be applied to all under this horrible delusion,

——A worthless tribe you are
Fit only for yourselves: you herd together;
And when the circling glass warms your vain hearts,
You talk of beauties that you never saw,
And fancy raptures that you never knew,

† See page 183, foregoing.

ties of parents. But these once broken, they run headlong every length of riot.

If moreover you attempt to keep and retain such men within the city, within the house and church of God, where his word is preached, and the prayers of the congregation ascend, that *they may* be *recovered out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will;* this place and service is grievous and irksome to them, the church and its faithful members are their abhorrence, while they are delighted only with the company of those, who having been long *dead in trespasses and sins*, have made their bodies mere sepulchres of their departed souls, in which they are *dead while they live*, and miserable beings—are only not putrified with the horrible stench of their enormous wickedness! in the practice of which, whilst they live, they cease not day and night to cry out dreadfully, to the great molestation of others, revelling and rioting in their sins, in noise and drunkenness, in filth and obscenity, impiously clamouring against God, and foully profaning his most holy name with their execrable oaths and direful blasphemies! Nay, and like the *demoniacs*, they cut themselves as it were with sharp stones, while shamefully consuming their wealth and fortune, destroying their health, and impairing all their faculties, piercing their own breasts with a sword, and miserably torturing, mangling and tormenting their perishing souls and bleeding consciences! Nor is it enough for them to enjoy their own madness, unless they are hurtful and prejudicial to others also. Hence they daily seek new companions in iniquity, whom they may drag down the precipice with themselves—nay, and often so violently are they bent against the serious and the sober, that it is safer to meet a bear or a lion in the way, or to dwell among serpents and scorpions than

these. And what is worst of all, if any in true pity to them would fain by right and wholesome counsel restore them to sense and happiness, and deliver them from this spiritual phrenzy, they cry out aloud against and revile their honest endeavours; they seek various pretences, and *adjure* them by the living God, *not to torment them before the time*, by calling them from their vile and flagitious practices by shewing them their dangerous state, and exhorting them to flee from the wrath to come. They think it the greatest punishment not to live in punishment, especially if inveterate in vice, and if they have been so long enslaved by the tyranny of the devil, as to be easy under the habit and custom of sinning!

This is the true state of the man spiritually possessed: whether it be by the devil of covetousness, drunkenness, lust, pride, envyings, or any other of that infernal crew, which in Legions attack mankind, and which first rushed in to devour and destroy, upon that fatal *disobedience which brought* them and *death into the world, and all our woe!*—Let the *covetous man* draw off the veil, and tremble to see himself in this frightful view: possessed with a Legion of infernal spirits, naked, stript of the robe of innocence, dwelling amongst the *dead*, amidst yellow dirt, which will serve only to enhance his horror; cutting himself therewith, as with sharp stones, wounding himself both in soul and body; while restrained neither by the laws of God or man, from madly doting on his beloved Mammon. Here let the *drunkard*, as in a glass, behold, and stand aghast at his frightful form.—It is generally said, if a reasonable man could see himself drunk, he would abhor himself and flee the vice—behold then, ye drunkards, and see in this demoniac your exact resemblance! What though you be clothed with

outward garments, what though you walk about without fetters and bonds, what though, shame to think, you, as well as other sinners, so far from being avoided, are even held in esteem by some of mankind, by many of your associates—yet when the intoxicating juice hath destroyed all reason in you, when the wine hath made naked your soul, and discovered your shame, when in noise and revelling you pass the midnight hours, thus cutting yourselves with the sharpest stones, preparing pains of body, present and eternal pangs of soul, when your feet are tied as it were with fetters, so that you reel too and fro, and stagger; your members so enslaved by the devil of drunkenness, that they can no longer discharge their offices: when thus degrading your nature, let it be remembered, that you are not acting the part of reasonable beings, but of those possessed with a Legion of unclean spirits; for deliverance from which, unless you apply to Christ, and work with his good Spirit,—eternally will they possess and torture you in the bottomless pit.——Let the *proud* and *envious* come also to this glass, and behold in it, their miserable deformity, their heavenly visage and divine countenance *dimmed and marred* with *ire, envy and despair*:* while madly doting upon themselves and this world's good, and

* This is taken from Milton, who describing Satan, amidst the agitations of infernal passions, has these fine lines—

> Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his face,
> Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envy and despair;
> Which marr'd his borrow'd visage and betray'd
> Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld;
> For heavenly minds from such distempers foul
> Are ever clear. B. I. Ver. 144.

This poet also speaking of the human countenance calls it,

> ——The human face divine. B. III. Ver. 44.

vainly envying others the possession of it, they may well be said to fly from the city, and resort of men, and to dwell amongst the habitations of the dead; while proud of their own abilities, wealth, or honour, or repining with black grief at others for enjoying the like transitory shadows, are they not horribly cutting *themselves*, crying out day and night to the great injury and terror of others, and the misery of their own souls!—And what is the *Adulterer*, but a man possessed with an unclean spirit, breaking all the bonds and fetters, all the restraints of the law both of God and man, *feeding upon carnage*, naked and wounded, a pest to the society where he dwells, near whom no one can safely pass by, and who again prefers the dwellings of darkness and death,* to the city of God and the regions of light.—And what is the *infidel*, the impious blasphemer of the God of truth, and the despiser of his Son Jesus Christ, what the *hater* of his brother, the *passionate furious man*,§ but so many madmen, possessed with Legions of devils, whom no chains or fetters can bind, whom no man can tame, exceeding fierce, their own tormentors, and their neighbour's vexation. And what too might we say of the *thief*, and the *murderer*, of the *liar* and the *swearer*, who is continually crying out day and night, belching his red-hot oaths to Heaven, and calling down speedy vengeance on his impious head!——what shall we say of each of these, and of the workers of iniquity of every sort and kind, but that they are, like this *Demoniac* possessed of a Legion of devils, yielding their members as instruments to them and

* The touch of a grave was polluting, Numb. xix. 16, says Henry. The unclean spirit drives people into that company that is *defiling*, and so keeps possession of them; Christ by rescuing souls out of Satan's power, saves the living *from among the dead*.

§ *Ira furor brevis est.*

to unrighteousness, and to their own bitter and final destruction!

Oh that they, and all under his dominion, would from this display, seriously consider the power, malice and tyranny of the evil spirit, before it be too late, that they may not be driven for ever from the presence of Jesus, nor have the great deep flash up with fiery billows to receive them, and close, for ever close, its horrid jaws upon them! This display of our spiritual enemy's inveterate hatred to mankind, must surely be sufficient to raise our detestation of his service, to awaken our fears, and to arouse our sleeping negligence.

Sin will assuredly end in destruction; and whatever we may fancy to ourselves, however strive to put off the evil day, if we live in the service of sin and Satan all our time upon earth, we can have but little hopes, that in the hour of death we shall obtain grace to repent, that in the day of judgment we shall find mercy or escape the punishment ordained for evil-doers.

Dearly beloved, lay these things to heart, and suffer not your deadly enemy to work your final overthrow: Sorrowful it is to think how vice and iniquity of every kind abounds through our land in general, and amongst ourselves, in particular. You are, no one of you ignorant hereof: would God you were as zealous in using every means to put a stop to its daily increasing progress! Have compassion, I beseech you on your own souls, as well as the souls of your neighbours, and no less on your mourning and afflicted country, which cannot expect any security from the just judgments of God, when her Sons and Inhabitants thus defy his laws, break through all restraint. *For these the land mourneth.* Oh, my beloved, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, to fall into the hands of an Almighty avenger, whose very presence

casts even devils into dread confusion; And his awful judgments are abroad:* the stoutest heart amongst you hath trembled at the horrible relation of thousands swallowed up in the bowels of the yawning earth,—of thousands, in a moment,—thoughtless perhaps as you of approaching ruin,—of thousands, in a moment, consigned to an irrecoverable, an eternal state! And it passed near us, yea, and spoke terror to us as it passed: it gave us an awful summons: Think, had it been our own case, in what a situation should we now have been? Ask, O man, examine thy heart, had it been thy case, which hadst thou now been, an eternal spirit tortured with Satan in the flames of hell?

That question concerns us all: and if we would secure our souls, it behoves us heedfully indeed to examine and answer it. If therefore, you have any dread of the angry and Almighty injured King of heaven, if any desire of everlasting peace, if any love to your neighbour's souls, if any regard for your king and your country's welfare,——seek to God, haste to the only *Mediator between God and man*, the *man Christ Jesus*, reform your lives, repent and *sit at his feet in your right minds*: use all your endeavours to be one of the *ten righteous* who may save our city and realm from destruction: Think of God's infinite clemency, forbearing patience and long-suffering mercy to these realms; think of the inexpressible love of Jesus, ready as he is to receive you, and who came into the world to deliver you by his own death, from the death of sin and the death eternal; think of the sad consequences attending a neglect and contempt of his love, of the sad consequences of falling into the hands of that infernal spirit, whose tyranny, malice, power, and hatred towards you, you have here seen pourtrayed in

* Preached at *West-ham, Nov.* 1755, upon the first information of the sad calamity at Lisbon.

their true colours: think of speedy approaching death, of sure attending judgment, of certain misery, or certain bliss, never, never to be reversed; O dearly beloved, think but of these things, lay them but seriously to heart, and then, by God's grace, you will all come to your *right mind,* be of all others most happy, and so delight in the love and praise of God here, as to have the sure hope of enjoying that love, and resounding that praise from immortal lips throughout a glorious eternity!

DISCOURSE X.

THE MAN DISPOSSESSED OF THE LEGION.

PART II.

LUKE viii. 31, 32, 33.

And they besought him that he would not command them to go into the deep. And there was there an herd of Swine feeding on the mountains; and they besought him, that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them; then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the Swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and were choked.

IN my former sermon, on this miracle, I endeavoured to obviate every objection which infidels and *half-thinkers* have, or may absurdly vent against it, and the divine author of it, by giving you in brief as plain and clear an account of the literal story, as I was able; which done, after having suggested in general some probable reasons, why Demoniacs, were suffered at all, and why more particularly about the time of our Saviour's coming,

and the place of his ministry—I enlarged according to my purpose on the spiritual use and improvements which we might derive to ourselves from this remarkable transaction: and that,

I. By considering the malice and tyranny of the devil, as displayed in the case of the unhappy person here under his power, which perhaps is set forth no where more emphatically in the whole scriptures; and this we found full of instructive lessons and of awakening calls to mankind. This finished, I come now,

II. To speak of the mighty and superior power of our Lord and Saviour, and

III. Of the returns which were made to him for this benefit.

The history sufficiently proves not only what St. John advances, that the *Son of God was manifested*, for this purpose, *that he might destroy the worksof the devil*: and that *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*:—but also that which Christ himself had taught the day before, namely, *that he was that stronger than the strong man armed, who coming upon him, should overcome him, take from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divide the spoil.* This he abundantly manifested, by the superior power which in the present case he exerted; and it deserves our notice by the way, that the doctrines and parables which Christ delivered, are very frequently illustrated by his subsequent acts, which considered in reference to his discourses cast mutual light upon each other.

1. Though in a former case, Christ had imposed silence upon the evil spirit, and suffered him not to speak, lest he should indulge a fond curiosity of the multitude, that were present; yet here as having with him those disciples alone to whom he shortly was about to give power over all unclean spirits, he not only suffers the Legion, in the man that was pos-

sessed, to speak to him, but himself interogates the Demon: that his disciples might by degrees learn and see, how Satan as *lightning was cast from heaven.* Therefore he suffered the devil to speak, and asked him, saying, *What is thy name?* And the more arrogantly he assumed a name to shew his power and might—*my name is Legion*—so much the more he magnified the power and authority of Christ. For however he fortified his palace, and kept his house guarded by an entire *Legion,* an army of thousands of infernal spirits, yet he could not so much defend it against Christ, as even to resist the power of but *one divine word,* as to maintain his empire one moment in the man, as to leave one single spirit in possession of their ancient dwelling.

2. The power of our Lord appeared greatly herein, that this Legion of devils, were compelled to meet him, to fall down and worship him. Be sure, if they could have avoided it, they would never have appeared in his hated presence. They were drawn by the secret power of God, as it were to the tribunal of their Judge; For they are bound in *chains of darkness* which are not to be seen with bodily eyes; and he, to whom *all things are delivered of his Father, all power in heaven and earth,* holds these chains in his hands, and draws them by a secret and hidden might; which they sensibly perceive, and upon which they are compelled to fall down at his feet, and to adore him in humble supplication, unwillingly and indignantly confessing him their judge and superior. Had it not been for this divine and secret virtue, by which Christ overrules the whole world of spirits, they would have fled far enough from his presence, and rather plunged the unhappy wretch they possessed into the deep, than have fallen down before Christ: a consideration which wonderfully magnifies the greatness of our Redeemer's power.

3. Sensible at once of this power and the punishment due to them, they cry out, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?*—thus abundantly proving the falsehood and absurdity of that charge, which the Pharisees brought against our Lord, "that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils:" thus manifestly declaring, that he performed this great work by the hand and finger of God, and thus giving in their testimony to that fundamental truth of our religion, the *true divinity and supreme power of Christ**—which one would think infidels and unbelievers should now be ashamed to oppose, when even *devils* themselves have been compelled to confess and acknowledge it. —Though they said, *What have we to do with thee,* τι ημιν και σοι† what right dost thou *yet* claim over us; nevertheless they shew directly, that these were only the words of terror and despair; for instantly they *pray* and *beseech* our Lord, that *he* would not *torment* them, that he would not *command* them to go out into the deep, nor send them away out of that country: thus plainly confessing that he had *something to do with them,* that he had power and authority over them. They well knew that a day of final judgment remained for them, in which they shall be thrust down into hell, with all the children of disobedience, into that fire which hath been prepared of old for this prince of darkness and his rebellious host, into that great deep, *that bottomless pit, the smoke of which as the smoke of a great furnace, ascendeth up for ever and ever.* But as knowing that this day was not yet at hand, the devil therefore expostulates with Christ, why he attacks him in his

* See John v. 18.

† The critics have abundantly proved this to be the meaning of the phrase, whom the reader may consult—See also the following sermon on the *Marriage in Cana of Galilee.*

kingdom, why he disturbs him in the peaceable possession of it, when as yet the day of judgment was not at hand; till which, like a roaring lion, he goes about, vehemently bent to satiate his accursed hunger upon the sons of men. *Woe! to the inhabiters of the earth and the sea*, saith the Apocalypt, *for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.* He doth not therefore here expostulate with our Lord, as though he refused to submit to his final doom, that he knew it were in vain to contend with: but his indignation—base and malicious adversary—is raised for that he may not have full and free power to torment and harm mankind, till that day shall come; thus again plainly confessing, that he hath it not in his power to do what he will, but only just so much as is allowed and permitted him by the just judgment of God; *hitherto shall his proud waves go, and no further.*

It is well observed by Bishop Hall, upon the devils putting up their prayers to Christ that, "Nature teaches every creature to wish a freedom from pain, the foulest spirits cannot but love themselves, and this love must needs produce a deprecation of evil; yet what a thing is this to hear the devil at his prayers, *I beseech thee torment me not*—devotion is not guilty of this, but fear; there is no grace in the suit of devils, but nature; no respect of glory to their Creator, but their own ease: they cannot pray against sin, but against torment for sin. What news is it now to hear the profanest mouth, in extremity imploring the sacred name of God when the devils do so? The worst of all creatures hates punishment and can say, *Lead me not into pain*, only the good heart can say, *Lead me not into temptation.* If we can as heartily pray against sin, for the avoiding of displeasure as against punishment, when we have

displeased, there is true grace in the soul: indeed if we could fervently pray against sin, we should not need to pray against punishment, which is no other than the inseparable shadow of that body; but if we have not laboured against our sins, in vain do we pray against punishment; God must be just, and *the wages of sin is death.*" Vain therefore is the prayer of a devil, while he continues a devil—even as vain as the prayer of a wicked man, while he continues wicked, and has no intention to amend his life.

4. And as the power of Jesus is thus seen, in his causing the Legion of devils, at a word, to fall down before him, and to implore respite from their destined punishment, so is it also in this, that the Demoniac,—whom before no man could tame or bind, no not with chains or fetters, all which he broke as easily as Samson did the withy bands,—should fall down at the feet of Jesus, in so suppliant a manner. Who is this that binds him so fast, as now no longer to run among the tombs and into the deserts, while he stands still at the feet of Christ? Who is this that chastises him, so as to cause him to cry out in this deplorable manner, to howl thus, and to beseech Jesus not to *torment* him? *I beseech thee, I adjure thee, by God, that thou torment me not!* This was the mighty effect of the divine word of Christ; he it was who commanded the unclean spirit, to come out of the man: he it was who spoke that authoritative word, *Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit*—and the words of the Son of the most high God are the whips and scourges of Satan and all his host. For it is a torment to him, when he cannot freely torment others; and his greatest trouble is to relinquish those souls, whom he imagined safe in his net, and secure for destruction. Whence we learn that the most powerful means to rescue

souls from his hands is the WORD of Christ the *gospel of truth*, the *power of God to salvation*, the *two-edged sword*, whose force and sharpness he cannot withstand: wherever that is read and preached in sincerity, no wonder, he storms and rages; for his kingdom can never stand long, never can he long possess any souls, who will come to this word, receive it with meekness and sincerity, and labour to obey it with all their hearts. So that one cannot admire to hear wicked and evil men so securely and blasphemously deride, and neglect the sacred *word* of God; while they are under the power and servitude of their master, the devil, it is his greatest cunning, his most subtle artifice to keep them in this spirit; and to fill them with contempt for the *word*, and all the sincere preachers and professors of it.——Take heed therefore, that you do not despise, deride or contemn this word; at which even devils tremble, and which will sound forth to the confusion of them, and of all unbelievers, at that day, when they shall hear—*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* And consider, I beseech you, that if such and so great is the power of the word of Christ, as to cause even a Legion of devils to fall down, adore and deprecate his vengeance, what shall a poor miserable naked sinner do, when he shall stand before the Judge of all the earth, clad in majesty and terror, —for before that Judge we must all assuredly stand, —*Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: even so, Amen.* Would you, my brethren, meet him on that day with joy, reverence his word and lay it up in your hearts; if you despise and reject it now read and preached unto you, remember the solemn caution of the great Apostle, *he that despiseth, despiseth not man but God.*

5. After the devils perceived that it was in vain to contend, and that such was the power of the word of Christ, that whether they would or not, they must be compelled to submit; they at length seem to shew an indignant willingness, and now entreat his leave to enter into an herd of swine, which was near at hand, feeding. Much rather had they remain in a human creature, whom they wish far more anxiously to destroy, than ten thousands of cattle; as their desires are to deface the image of God, and to drag the soul into eternal perdition. But as compelled to retire, these malignant spirits request that they may be sent away into a herd of *swine*, an animal correspondent to themselves, that if they could not hurt man in his person, they might in his property. And here again, they betray their great impotency and inability to harm, in that although there was a whole Legion of them, yet they had not power over so much as *one* swine, without the permission and sufferance of Christ. But as soon as he gave the word—GO—immediately the whole Legion, departing from the miserable man, entered into the herd of swine, drove them violently down a steep place, and they perished in the waters. St. Mark specifies the number; and tell us, they were *about two thousand.* And as the devils thus essentially departed from the man into the swine, it is obvious to every impartial inquirer, that these spirits cannot be, as some have supposed, only the evil passions and corrupt affections of men nay or any internal maladies and diseases, *but real spirits;* and that of consequence the demoniacs in the gospel, were real possessions and not lunatics or epileptics, as some have advanced, and as was observed in the former sermon; and as the reality of a spiritual agency is undeniably manifest, from hence so is it equally manifest, that there could be no collusion or deceit. Since it is self-

evident, that a herd of swine could not be confederates in any fraud. Their death therefore in this instructive and convincing circumstance was infinitely a greater blessing to mankind, than if they had been slain for the appointed uses.

From this display of the divine power of our Saviour, we cannot but be filled with the most awful apprehensions of his tremendous majesty and authority: with the most comfortable reflections on the sense of his compassion towards us, and care over us; and with the fullest confidence upon the view of his divine power, which is sufficient to guard and protect us, against all the malice, against every attack and temptation of our spiritual enemies, *those principalities and powers, those rulers of the darkness of this world.* Let them rage against us with never so much fury, let Satan, that blood-thirsty wolf, employ all his malice and all his might against us, yet will he never be able to tear us out of the hands of our good and faithful Shepherd, yet shall he never be able to prevail against us. How gladly would he have worked the final and eternal overthrow of this man, whom he had thus led captive at his will? yet could he avail nothing, nor in the least prevent that approach to Christ, which was hateful to his thoughts and destructive of all his hopes! Nay, and so great is the weakness and impotency of this *poor* but *proud* spirit, that he cannot pass so much as into one swine, a base and contemptible animal, without the permissive sufferance of Christ. For as God created all animals, clean as well as unclean, noxious as well as serviceable beasts, so he rules them by his divine providence, defends and preserves them as it seemeth good to him; not a *sparrow* falls to the ground without his notice; no need have WE therefore to fear the powers of darkness, if we put on the armour of light: if we walk as *in the light, sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and*

make him alone our fear and our dread. And since without the will of our heavenly Father, not a *hair can fall from our heads*, how can Satan harm us, either in body or soul, if with firm and godly trust we commit and commend ourselves and all that we have to his almighty protection? However terrible he may be in himself, and doubtless his power and tyranny is great and terrible enough towards those who are in his snare, (as we saw in the former sermon) yet we shall have no need to fear him, if we trust in Jesus Christ, whose power we see is so infinitely superior to that of this *strong man*, and confiding in whom we shall surely conquer, *for this is our victory even our faith.*

As we learned from the former description of the tyranny of Satan over this man's body, what is his tyranny over the soul, as well as who and how wretched they are, that are led captive by him at his will—So from hence again we learn, what kind of men they are over whom the devil claims and obtains this power. The Angel Raphael, in the book of Tobit, shews that the devil hath power over such only as exclude and shut out God from their minds and thoughts, and are wholly intent upon their lusts and carnal appetites, like the wild ass upon the mountains. Such are here well figured out to us by *swine*, unclean beasts that wallow in the mire of sensuality, and transform themselves by excess; men who neither know nor consider the dignity for which they were created, who are void of all true reason and understanding, and who suffer themselves, like brute beasts, to be wholly transported and carried away by the blind and headstrong affections of their flesh: such are they that are slaves to the filthiness of their belly, making it their GOD, passing whole days and nights in *swinish* eating and drinking: *Wo unto them*, (saith the prophet) *that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that*

continue until night, till wine inflame them: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. They regard not themselves, who are the *work* of the Lord, and the *operation* of his hands, but horribly defile that *work*, degrading themselves, as the companions of Ulysses are said to have done,* into mere swine retaining little more, while wallowing in the filth and drunkenness, than the outward form of man. Such too are whoremongers and adulterers, who defile themselves with promiscuous lust, and make their bodies, not temples of the Holy Ghost, but members of harlots, and thus reduce themselves into the bestial class. The same may be said of and easily applied to uncleanness of every sort, obscenity and filthiness of every kind, to all those vices and impurities, which cause men to live in the base service of their lusts and appetites, and to forget the *operation of God's hands;* which cause men to degrade their bodies from the high dignity offered to them of becoming the temples of the Holy Ghost, and the Images of God, to mere brutal forms, sure receptacles of Satan, and all his infernal crew; who will never fail to enter into such,

* See Homer's Odyssey, Book X. Ver. 264 & seq. Mr. Pope's translation; see also his note on line 361. Milton in his fine Mask of Comus, beautifully enlarges on this allegory; he speaks thus of the power of Comus his potion:

> Soon as the potion works their human countenance
> Th' express resemblance of the Gods, is chang'd
> Into some brutish form of Wolf or Bear,
> Or Ounce, or Tiger, Hog or bearded Goat,
> All other parts remaining as they were;
> And they, so perfect is their misery,
> Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
> But boast themselves more comely than before,
> And all their friends and native home forget
> To roll with pleasure in a sensual stye.

How lively a representation of sinners transformed from the image of God!

as they did into the swine, and to drive them headlong on from sin to sin, till they plunge them down the precipice into the bottomless deep, there to be choked eternally,* there to perish, and be confined with them, ever dying, yet never to die; ever living, and yet without hope of life, wretched and reprobate from God, from glory and from bliss!—Oh how should this consideration awaken and stir us up to raise our affections from things below to things above —how should it cause us to consider ourselves as the *work* of *God's hands*, and to take care, that we answer the dignity for which we were created, by avoiding and abhorring all those brutal lusts and appetites, which will thrust us down beneath the vilest beasts, and subject us to the eternal possession and tyranny of the most severe and cruel oppressor!

Thus Christ suffered the devils to go away into the herd of swine; without his permission they could not have done so; and that HE had *power* to give these swine into the hands of Satan, and to consign them to destruction, no man will presume to deny,

* Bishop Smallbrook in his Vindication, &c. vol. i. p. 223, makes the like use of this miracle, "The lake in which the devils and the swine together were plunged, is a lively representation of that unfathomable deep, or abyss of fire deprecated by the devils, as the proper place of torments, into which all obstinately impure and unbelieving persons shall finally sink, and continue in the possession of those infernal spirits for ever. And indeed the brutes that here suffered in the lake of Tiberias, bear some resemblance of the brutes of all kinds that shall be destroyed in the company of damned spirits, in the great lake of fire at the conflagration of the world. If therefore any weight is to be laid on *allegories*, and considered with the literal sense of miracles, none surely can be of so great importance as this, which places before our imagination, in very lively ideas, the infinite but vindictive power of Christ, and his declared condemnation of devils and wicked men together in that lake of everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his accursed agents. And may all persons concerned make the proper use of this allegorical intimation of the supreme Judge, that not only impure men, but likewise those that *believe not, shall be finally damned.*"

who remembers that this *same Jesus*, is the Lord of heaven and earth, endued with all *power*, and that all creatures are his, *for all things were created by him, and the Father hath delivered all things into his hands:* And when moreover it is considered, that they were a just forfeiture both to the laws of God and man, (as was observed in the former sermon) it will appear that this was a single act of *Justice* in our Saviour, thus punishing the transgression of these Gadarenes: and every judgment upon earth may as well, and truly be laid to the immediate act of God as this, when it is plain, that the sins and transgressions of men are the real *cause*, why the Almighty Father of heaven and earth is obliged to vindicate his injured honour, and to permit the *evil*, duly merited, to fall on the heads of the undeserving. How many thousand souls have perished in the late horrible commotion of the earth—yet who will dare upon this to tax the justice or goodness of Almighty God,—and not rather look to the sins of a people as the sad cause of their fatal overthrow? Just the same was the case of the Gadarene herd: how impious then is the blasphemy of those infidels, who dare to *abuse* and *revile* our Redeemer, for punishing an offence, which, as it appears, his *justice* demanded: and which his *mercy* hath so ordered, as to be attended with the means of signal instruction to the souls of men, teaching us at once the power of the infernal spirits,—the reality of spiritual agency—the horrors of a soul enslaved by Satan—the miserable sita - tion and vile disposition of such as are subjectt o his slavery, even of those who wallow in sensual af- fections—and so giving us the most striking admoni - tions to fly from the power of the old serpent, and to secure ourselves from his malice and tyranny under the loving protection of an almighty and all-merciful Redeemer!—And in the wisdom of God, how many m orereasons, sufficient and satisfactory, just

and right there may be, we, with our short-sighted faculties, should not wholly presume to define either in this or any other display of his sovereign power; but rather should receive sincerely the good instructions which may be derived from thence, and in due thankfulness for every manifestation of his justice and mercy, his *goodness* and *severity*, study to make him the most grateful acknowledgments, by determining to cleave to his merciful guidance and mighty protection all the days of our life. And this naturally leads me to consider the

III. And last thing, whereof I proposed to speak, namely, The *returns* that were made to our Lord for this great work; which though the *keepers* of the herd and the Gadarenes did not make, yet the *man* who had been saved by his power, did in a signal manner:—and we may, each of us, be *that man;* and could we have the least glimpse of Satan's infernal hatred to our souls, we should not depart from these walls, till we were indeed each one of us *that man*, rescued from his tyranny, and saved into all the love and all the grace of Jesus.

1. They that kept and fed the swine having seen what was done, fled and went and told it in the city, and in the country: In this they did not amiss; for Christ would have his works known, through the whole world, and preached in every town and city and village. Nor doth he reject the ministry of mean and obscure men: he chose his apostles from the *weak* of the earth, to shew that there is no need to depend upon the authority and esteem of the persons who declare to us the work and will of the most high God. To do this principally concerns them whom the Lord hath appointed the pastors of his church. These with truth and sincerity must declare whatever the Lord hath done for his flock and stir men up worthily and duly to receive him.

But they must take care, that they do not, like these herdsmen, upon the sight of God's judgment prejudice the ears of men, and turn their eyes from the sight of a God avenging for sin, and reconciled only by repentance and faith, which is in Christ Jesus: for from the circumstances of this history we may collect, that these herdsmen not only told what was done, but moreover excused themselves, lest the citizens should think, the swine were lost through their neglect; and doubtless they mixed their complaints against Jesus, by whose fault their hire, through the loss of the herd, was lost; by which means they lost also that which was far more excellent, namely, the fruit of this miracle, whereby they might have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ! And a sad woe indeed hangs over those herdsmen and keepers of the Lord's flock, who prefer their hire to the salvation of the souls entrusted to their charge! *Woe be to the shepherds of Israel,* saith the Lord, *that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flock?* &c. Would to God, that all the Lord's shepherds might be found faithful feeders of the flock, *seeking that which was lost, and bringing again that which was driven away, binding up that which was broken, and strengthening that which was sick, and healing that which was diseased.*

2. But whatever the herdsmen were, the Gadarenes, one would not have doubted, must have been thankful to Jesus upon the report of this great benefit done to their countryman and their country; and highly desirous of retaining their benefactor. Amongst the heathens, if any illustrious hero happened to deliver his country from wild beasts, monsters, tyrants or any other evil, they erected proud columns to his memory, his statue was seen in every place, altars blazed to his glory, they honoured him with

the high appellation of *Saviour*,* and thought nothing, not even *divine* honours, too much to confer upon him. And when Christ had removed a monster from the Gadarenes more formidable and fearful than any in heathen story, even a *Legion of devils*, and rendered the way, by which no man could pass before, secure from danger; could we expect that he should have been received by them other than as a *Saviour* and as *God*, with the acclamations and Io's of all the rejoicing people!—But alas, how different was the event! how amazing the hardness of these people's hearts—alarmed with a strange and preposterous fear, they besought him to depart out of their coasts! Such a fear as frequently falls upon those, who being only struck into *terror*, at the judgments of God, neither inquire into the true cause of them, nor consider the goodness and grace which are the consequences of them. Such a servile fear cleaves to us all, and descends from our first father Adam, who after the fall, perceiving the presence of God, *was afraid and hid himself*. This fear arises from the knowledge of sin, mens consciences convicting and accusing them, that they, on account of their offences, are liable to the divine wrath, *that* divine wrath which they cannot but acknowledge to be justly due to their manifold offences. This evidently was the case with the Gadarenes. For though the cause might have been secret to them, as in the case of Job, why Christ suffered the devils to enter into the swine: yet to this they could be no strangers, that they fed these animals in contempt of the law of their God, which immediately forbad the

* The learned reader will not want instances hereof, and the unlearned can scarce open any book of heathen antiquity, without abundant proof; a remarkable instance however may be found by those who think it worth their while to consult it, in the 74th page and 216 note of my translation of *Callimachus*; see also page 49, ver. 148, &c.

Jews the use and eating of swine's flesh: and though they might not themselves have eaten of them, yet in feeding them (as is supposed) for sale amongst the Romans and Gentile inhabitants in their country, or in the neighbouring parts, they fully transgressed the law, which the devil knowing, therefore sought permission from Christ to enter into the herd. The Gadarenes conscious hereof, dared not to drive away Christ by force out of their country, which, with his little band, it had been no difficult matter for them, humanly speaking, to have done; —but they now begin to reckon it as a great benefit if they may sustain no more loss. For they acknowledge the divine power in him; and *pray him to depart out of their coasts.* Their prayer was not like St. Peter's, when conscious of his own manifold unworthiness, he said, *depart from me, for I am a* SINFUL MAN, *O Lord.* They added not—*for we are sinful men*—this was by no means the r motive; but it was their fear, lest, after their present damage, much greater should ensue from Jesus. This is a remarkable instance of ingratitude; and so much the more notorious, because we are told that the *whole multitude* of the country of the Gadarenes round about joined in the petition, not *one* being found in so large a city, so extensive a country, who was for retaining Jesus amongst them! "Seldom ever did a good motion find such perfect agreement; it is not so uncommon for a multitude to conspire in evil; generality of assent is no warrant for any act: common error carries away many, who inquire not into the reason of aught, but the practice; therefore we are warned not to *follow the multitude to do evil;* and that *the way to hell is a beaten road,* through the many feet that tread it." There was a time when, as general assent was given to remove this same divine person from the world, as now to remove him from these coasts! When the

horrid and universal cry, *Crucify him, crucify him!* "O blessed Jesus, how worthy are they to want thee, that wish to be rid of thee! Thou hast just cause to be weary of us, even while we sue to hold thee; but when once our wretched unthankfulness grows weary of thee, who can pity us to be punished with thy departure: who can say it is other than righteous, that thou shouldst retort upon us at that day, *Depart from me ye cursed!*"*—What wretched and foolish estimators of things were these Gadarenes! Grant it, they had lost their herd; yet two of their countrymen and fellow-creatures had been delivered from the dreadful tyranny of Satan, whose salvation and recovery from his snare was to be preferred to all the cattle on a thousand hills. And moreover the public way, which had been infested by them, was again rendered safe, and the whole country rescued from its former infamy and danger. Yet thankless were they for these benefits, yea, not only thankless, but wretchedly ungrateful for them,—yea, uneasy and dissatisfied through them.

They present us with a striking picture of those, whom neither the judgments of an eternal God, nor the word of his power and majesty openly preached and pressed upon their consciences, can move so much as to cause them even to think of receiving Christ. But enslaved by the love of profit, honour or pleasure, they had rather drive Christ from them, and be deprived of his word, than *lose their swine*, forsake their vile lusts and appetites, and bid adieu to the pleasures of sense, the *lust of the flesh*, the *lust of the eye*, and *the pride of life*. Alas! too many of these are found in Israel; who desire not to hear, or to be disturbed with the sound of the gospel and the name of Christ, so be they may but qui-

* Bishop Hall.

etly attend to drunkenness, and lasciviousness, to extortion and rapine, to pride and envyings, and the other works of the flesh. These are the men into whom Satan desires to enter, and who, if remaining thus brutal, will assuredly be delivered up to his power. Yet, worse than these are such as go farther still, and not only *entreat* Christ to depart from them, with these Gadarenes, but revile and reproach the ministers of his word, and persecute the gospel of God our Saviour, with all their malice and devices, rejoicing in every opportunity to oppose its progress and blacken its professors. These surely are all deserving enough, in justice, to be utterly forsaken of Christ; but how great soever is the iniquity of men, yet his goodness and mercy is greater: For even the Gadarenes themselves were not wholly rejected by him; he left them a preacher and proclaimer of the divine miracle wrought by him, even the man himself upon whom the blessing was conferred; and afterwards came again himself to this place, that he might at least have some fruit from amongst them; so unweariedly and patiently does the divine mercy and goodness wait and watch for the salvation of men—so rich and abundant is the God of love in forbearance and loving-kindness to all his creatures!—But when, spite of all these mercies, and this long sufferance, but little harvest was to be reaped amongst them, who had thus ungratefully refused Christ, and given as it were, an earnest of the future ingratitude and madness of the whole Jewish nation; Remarkable it is, that in the just judgment of God, which overtook that people and state, this same city of GADARA was the *first* that fell into the hands of the Romans, and was so utterly destroyed and extirpated by them, that not one stone was left upon another. —A fearful instance of the vindictive justice of almighty God, and an alarming admonition to us,

not to trifle with his exceeding great mercy and forbearance, not to reject Christ and his gospel now freely offered to us, lest haply we fall into his avenging hands, and become ourselves lasting monuments of ingratitude and rebellion to the kindest of Saviours, the best and most loving of masters! who will rejoice to receive us, who will *joy over us with singing*, when inspired with holy gratitude we come to him, and like this Demoniac shew ourselves duly sensible of the inestimable benefits procured for us by the riches of his grace. For,

3. In this man, we have an example how we ought rightly to improve this miracle, and every other call of God;

First, We are told, that *he sat at the feet of Jesus*, and thus became a careful and attentive hearer of his word. 2dly, That he sat *clothed*, that is, clothed again with that ingenuous modesty, holy shame, and blessed righteousness, of which the fury of the devil had before deprived him. 3dly, That he sat *in his right mind*, not only in his right mind, and with proper behaviour in regard to himself, but also in his right mind towards Christ, having due and proper sentiments of him, and of his marvellous works. 4thly, That leaving his country and his ungrateful fellow-citizens, he desired to go away with, and to be an inseparable attendant on this blessed Lord, who had done so great things for his soul. This is true conversion, this is real gratitude, through which a man resigns himself up wholly to Christ, to his divine teaching and leading; but lest any one should think, that it was necessary for all who would be saved, to leave their house and family and domestic affairs, to join themselves to the company of the apostles, and to follow Christ wherever he went preaching the gospel,—lest any should entertain so false and dangerous a notion, Christ, we find, denies his petition and sends him

away to his own house; for there is diversity of callings amongst believers; and St. Paul by the Spirit orders, that every one should *continue in that same calling, wherein he is called:* A necessary and important consideration to many, that they may not transcend the bounds of their duty by presuming upon that to which they are not called, and an admonition to all, that they may discharge their duty faithfully, in whatever calling and state of life it hath pleased God to place them. For in every station, whether a man be a prince or a peasant, whether a noble or a private man, whether a gentleman or a labourer, he may live to the glory of God and promote that glory, he may declare the benefits of God conferred upon himself, and stir up others to a knowledge of the Redeemer. And, as was before observed, it is an instance of the particular goodness of Christ, that whereas in many other cases he commanded, that they should tell no man of his mighty works, here in the present case he left behind him a preacher of his grace and mercy, even with this ungrateful and unworthy people. And as he himself was entreated to depart from their coasts, so he commands this man to declare abroad how great things *God* had done for him. He, obedient to the command of Jesus, published throughout the whole city and through all Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; nor was this publication wholly without fruit; since for the present it is said, *that all men marvelled:* This admiration frequently is the first step to true faith in Christ; to which some in this country afterwards attained: for it was from these coasts, that they brought unto him the man who was *deaf* and *dumb.* And when the *faithful Canaanite* applied to Jesus in behalf of her daughter, who was grievously vexed of a devil: it seems highly reasonable to suppose, that she had first heard of him and con-

ceived so *strong* a *faith* in him from the preaching of this very person, thus commissioned by Christ to speak aloud the noble acts of the Lord. As therefore the leaving this man behin , and thus sending him forth to publish abroad what God had done for him, giveth us a most striking instance of our Saviour's goodness; so doth he also supply all Christians with an example how they should behave themselves to their only Lord and Master. For though our condition by the blessing of God hath not been such as to be bodily possessed of the devil, yet are we spiritually subject to him through sin: and by the eternal Son of God only rescued from his tyranny and saved from his hard and accursed service. Our duty therefore it is, after the example of this man, 1st, Diligently and constantly to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest his holy word: 2dly, To *put him on* by faith. 3dly, To prove the soundness and *rightness* of our minds (if I may so say) by the modesty, meekness, sobriety and rectitude of our lives and actions. 4thly, Obediently to submit ourselves wholly to him, *to take up our cross and follow him* in the way of his commandments: and in fine, by proclaiming and confessing his infinite love and mercy to us, who are less than the least of all his mercies, to bring as many as we are able to a joyful participation of the like unbounded love, the like free and unmerited mercy.——

Can you, therefore wonder, my beloved brethren, that we proclaim—would you not rather be astonished, did WE, as his messengers and ministers, as immediately sent forth by him to publish the great things God hath done for the souls of men,—did we *omit* to *proclaim* these things unto you—did we fail to admonish and exhort you with all our *power*, did we cease to cry aloud and invite you, in his

name, to *come, taste and try how good and gracious this Lord* of love, this king of grace and glory is? —to *come and drink of the water of life freely?* —You have seen in this miracle a full display of the tyranny of Satan, of the hatred he beareth to all your souls, and of the misery, the unspeakable misery awaiting those who are given up for ever to his infernal fury. You have seen, in return, the far superior power of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and cannot doubt of either his ability or will to rescue you from the jaws of Satan, seeing for this purpose *he came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil.* You know a sure and ready way to obtain his grace, to secure his favour, to live happy under his divine protection, and now life or death are set before you—you must choose for yourselves (and may the grace of God incline you all to a happy choice that you may no longer *halt between two opinions!*) You must choose for yourselves, which master you will serve, *God* or *Baal,* whose yoke you will take upon you, the *light* and *easy* one of Christ, or the hard and galling one of Satan.—You have in the Gadarenes and in the Demoniac examples of either choice; *they* prayed Christ to *depart* from their coasts; *he* prayed him, that he might be suffered to abide with him——and which think you acted the wiser part? I doubt not, you have all long since determined that question; for the love of God then act according to the dictates of true wisdom, consider what the loss, the eternal loss of a soul is, and do not, I beseech you, like these Gadarenes preposterously refuse every offer of Christ, do not let his ministers *stretch out their hands all day to a gainsaying people;** Do not let yon holy Altar† spread with the

* Rom. x. 21. Isai. lxv. 2. See also ver. 4, of this chapter.

† Preached on a *Sacrament Sunday,* and I hope it will need no apology, that I so frequently insist on this most important duty.

sacred symbols of your Lord's most precious body and blood, so often invite, so often entreat, so often beseech you to approach and refresh your souls: Do not, O do not, too long pass it by unheeded, and *make light* of it, as though it concerned you not: the day *may* come when you will severely repent hereof, when like the Gadarenes you will find no quarter, but perish in horror unspeakable by the just judgment of a long-suffering, merciful God! It may speedily be too late, if now you reject the proffers of grace; and will not lay your soul's eternal welfare seriously to heart: for over and above the general calls of the gospel, the present times are uncommonly critical, and the calls from heaven loud, particular, and alarming:—Would to God, you would all carefully attend to them! would to God, that I might be made the happy means of persuading such of you, as are yet strangers to his love, to come to Christ, to sit at his feet clothed indeed in the robes of righteousness, in your *right minds*, and wholly obedient to his good will and pleasure; would to God, that my words, by his grace, might be so carried to all your hearts, as to bring you all to the table of the Lord, in true repentance and lively faith: and Oh, that my hands might be there so blest to you, as to convey the precious body and blood of your dear Redeemer to each of your souls; that you might all so eat and drink as to have the sure hope of everlasting life! O that I could so display the love and power of our divine Master, as to captivate your willing hearts to his pleasing rule, as to cause you, through his Spirit, to abound in all the works of love and holiness: for *herein is our father glorified, that we*, his children, *bring forth much fruit.* And if any of you yet resolve not to hearken and do, if sin and Satan's galling chain, still please you better than the sweet bands of Jesus's love—reflect only in a re-

tired moment, what *must* be the consequence, what *will* be the end, and upon whom the punishment *must* fall. The evil spirit would keep you in *present*, to overwhelm your souls in *eternal* darkness; the good Spirit would bring you now to the *light of life*, that you might rejoice in the light of glory for ever; Satan desireth and eagerly hunteth after every means to destroy: the Saviour of the world, as eagerly hath *bought up* every means to save: he hath bled on the cross, and given his life a ransom for you: he hath paid the full price: and if you reject this love and scorn this mercy,—*Oh tell it not in Gath!*—miserable beyond description must you be;—dreadful beyond imagination will your punishment be found—and nothing can alleviate it—yours and yours alone must be the sad, the woeful, the eternal loss; and yet I will not say, *yours alone*, but ours also, who watch over you for good, and earnestly wish your souls everlasting health! and if my poor and weak endeavours have ever commended themselves to you, my dear friends and beloved brethren, I entreat, I beseech, I earnestly exhort you, by the love of Jesus our common Saviour, by all your future hopes, by our common friendships, by all you hold dear, I beseech you, ere it be too late lay these things seriously to heart, come to Christ the only Saviour of your souls——come to him, and at the blessed altar renew your covenant with him: there contemplate him as dying for your sins, there plead his holy and irreversible promises, there feed upon his most precious body and blood: and may you there be so "filled with his grace and heavenly benediction," as to bring forth much fruit, as to abound in every good word and work, that *men seeing your light shine before* THEM, *may glorify your Father who is in heaven: that the righteous may see it and rejoice, and the mouth of all iniquity be stopped.* Amen!

DISCOURSE XI.

THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN.

MARK vii. 32.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

MAN was made in the beginning, after the image and similitude of God; outwardly free from all diseases, sickness and calamities, inwardly pure and clear in his understanding, obedient in his will, orderly and holy in his affections:—his eyes were opened to the sight and love of God, his ears were attentive to his will and word, his tongue was loosed to his praise and glory, his hands were ready to perform, his feet were swift to run in the way of God's commandments—"thus was he made altogether like unto God, in righteousness, in holiness, in wisdom, in truth, to be short, in all kind of perfection."* In this state he was pronounced *very good*, by his Creator, and this state of felicity would have known no end had he continued obedient, had he not violated the single precept of his God.

* Homily for *Christmas Day*.

Tempted to this, by the *envy* and *malice* of the devil, he hearkened, disobeyed his Creator, and fell from his original blessedness. With *Sin*, *Death** entered into the world; and all those diseases and evils, which reign and rage amongst mankind, straightway man's nature was corrupted, the pure and clear understanding was darkened, the will obedient and direct became perverse, rebellious, and inclined to evil, and the orderly and holy affections, irregular, excessive and impure: the eyes were blinded, and could no more see the beauty of spiritual objects; the ears were closed, like those of the deaf adder; the tongue was tied or became a *world of iniquity:* the hands could no longer perform, nor the feet walk in the paths of God's commandments: thus was the whole man deprived of all spiritual strength, and dead indeed to every good word and work—according to his sentence,—"*In the day, that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*"

Hence it is, that Christ urges the necessity of *regeneration*, of the new-birth, of new life to all these dead powers and faculties of the soul; hence it is that St. Paul declares, *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold all things are become new:* nay, and he asserts positively, that nothing will avail us in Christ Jesus, but this new creation: though we pride ourselves never so much upon spiritual or temporal advantages, *in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision* (no external privileges, no fancied outward tokens of God's favour,) *availeth any thing, but a new creature*,—To shew us the necessity and nature of which new creation, numberless instances

* Rom. v. 12. See an excellent discourse of our learned Bishop Bull's, concerning the state of man before the fall. Vol. iii. Discourse 5.

are given us, in the gospel, of persons afflicted with bodily diseases, who applied to, and obtained relief from Jesus;—instructing us, that he alone who created can regenerate us, and that he is as willing as able to restore life and health to our fallen souls, if we come to him, labouring and heavy-laden, and desirous of his rest. To shew us our defiling impurity and the sovereign power of Christ, we have seen him cleanse the polluted LEPER; to shew us our spiritual inability to any good work, we have seen him restore the trembling *Paralytic;* to shew us our spiritual death, we have seen him raise the *dead:* and in others equally instructive, the same lessons have been inculcated upon our hearts in general, teaching us the cause and fatal consequences of sin to our souls, the power of divine faith, applying to and apprehending Christ the only physician and the fruits of that faith manifested in the new life of love and obedience, which is the infallible consequence of the new creation, nay, and indeed, the only sure and indisputable test, we can have, of our *new birth.*

I propose to shew this a little more particularly, and from the examples of the deaf and the dumb, the blind and the lame restored by Christ—to prove to you, that if you would partake of his salvation, and are indeed heirs thereof through faith, your *ears* must have been opened by his divine finger and power to a delight in his *word;* your *tongue* loosed to a celebration of his *praise* and *glory;* your *eyes* opened to the sight and love of spiritual *objects,* and your hands and feet made ready and glad to perform his will, and walk in his holy ways:* or in

* St Austin in the first book of Evangelical Questions. Quest. xviii.—observes—Mutos, *qui Dominum non laudant vel non confitentur fidem, signant:* cæcos, *qui non intelligunt, etiamsi obtemperant jubentibus;* surdos, *qui non obtemperant etiamsi intelligunt;* claudos, *qui præcepta non implent.*

other terms, that your understanding, will and affections, your thoughts, words and actions must have been renewed and changed, must have been transformed from this world, and delivered from the servitude of sin into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; must have been turned from vanity, and directed into the right channel of God's service and glory.

And to this end I shall begin with the miracle wrought by Christ upon the deaf and dumb Man in the Gospel,* which I will first explain to you, and secondly, give you some sure marks and evidences, whereby you may know whether indeed your ears have been opened and your tongue loosed by this almighty power: and may he, by his grace, so open all our ears to hear and receive his divine word, that our tongues may be loosed to his honour and praise, and our whole lives bear testimony to the due sense we have of the great things which he hath done for our souls!

I. When our Saviour was returned into Galilee, from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, where he had

* This Gospel, saith Heminge, containeth one of the Lord's miracles, whereby he sheweth his *power*, his *will*, and his *office*. His *power* appeareth in this, that all created things are at his command, as *diseases*, devils, seas, &c. His *will* is seen by his readiness to help, for he is most ready to help all that call upon him. His *office* appeareth in that he is a Saviour according to his name, which is JESUS. These things are to be seen in almost every one of Christ's miracles, which we must learn to use aright. For we must use the *power* of Christ our Lord against the tyranny, sophistry and hypocrisy of the world, yea and against the whole kingdom of Satan. We must set the knowledge of his *will* against the perverse will and judgment of our flesh. We must arm ourselves with a regard to his *office* against all Antichrists, that would rob him of his office.——And again,——this miracle confirmeth that Christ both can and will help all that are afflicted, who are brought to him and seek his help. Also it overthroweth the error of them, who, shunning Christ as an austere judge, do call upon saints. And moreover it warneth us to flee unto Christ only by faith and prayer, when we are in trouble and distress.

found so eminent an instance of humility and faith in the *woman of Canaan*, they bring unto him, we are told, one *that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech;* the word μογιλαλον implies not absolute dumbness, but such a difficulty in speaking as to be able to utter only a confused and inarticulate sound, and it is observed that such natural dumbness, is for the most part attended with deafness; "Whether the patient were naturally deaf and perfectly dumb; or imperfectly dumb and accidentally deaf, I labour not; sure I am, that he was so deaf, that he could not hear of Christ, so dumb that he could not speak for himself: good neighbours supply his ears, his tongue, they bring him to Christ:—Behold a miracle led in by charity, acted by power led out by modesty."—It was a true office of love to speak thus in the cause of the dumb Man: to lend senses to him that wanted: these neighbours, you see, had all the fruits and effects of true faith: for in bringing the man to Christ they 1st, acknowledged *him* to be the true Messiah, able and willing to save: 2dly, they call upon him, their faith was not dead, *they beseech him to put his hand upon the deaf and dumb man:* and, 3dly, they shewed true brotherly love both in heart, word, and work, by bringing this afflicted and miserable creature to Christ. After their example should we also thus make our faith advantageous to others: this spiritual service we owe to all: and this brotherly love and regard for the welfare and salvation of our neighbour, will and must abound in our hearts, if our faith be sincere, for such a faith only as worketh by love, will avail us before God. And hence we see how far our faith may be made serviceable to others, of which I spoke at large, when discoursing of those who bore the paralytic on his bed to Christ.*

* This *Deaf* and *Dumb* man had no faith of his own, for he

They besought our Saviour, that he would *lay his hand* on this afflicted person: as knowing that this had been the custom with the ancient prophets, and as observing that Christ by so doing had already healed many; by which ceremony several particulars were signified; for they that blessed others by the laying on of hands, supplied the room of God: the hand signified God's help, power and favour, and the laying them on a person, implied, that he on whom they were laid, was under the favour and protection of God, and also blessed of him: in blessings, God's favour and help were thus prayed for; and in sacrifices the offerings were thus dedicated to him. In healings, God's hand stretched

could not hear the word, whereby *that faith cometh:* and yet was healed by Christ for the *faith* of other men —Other mens *faith* may prevail so far as to bring us to Christ, and may obtain for us the *preventing* grace of God. A lesson of Christian *love* to us all. Parents especially should thus pray for their children, as at all times, so when they bring them to *baptism.* Thus Monica prayed continually for her son Austin, who afterwards became so celebrated a light of the church; it being impossible, as St. Ambrose used to say, that a *child* of so many prayers and tears should perish. Thus should we pray for all, for the weak and erring, as well as for enemies also, that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth Nothing can be more evident from the scriptures, than the falsehood of the Jesuitical evasions of the church of Rome, and of the deductions which they gather from hence, that a man may be *saved* by the faith of another, though he hath none himself, since a man shall *live* not by another's but his own faith—and the *merits* and *works,* which they sell, though enriching their own coffers, yet do they plunge infinite numbers of souls into destruction. God open their eyes and give them a better mind!—There is a great difference, says Heminge, to be put betwixt corporal benefits and everlasting salvation. As for corporal benefits the pious may obtain them even for the impious at God's hand. But as for salvation they cannot obtain it for them, unless they themselves also have first conceived faith by the word of God. For except the godly might obtain corporal benefits for the ungodly, the world could not stand in this huge flood of wickedness and offence.—Our church in her collect for Easter-day, acknowledges, that "*God* by his *special grace preventing* us, doth *put* into our minds *good desires.*"

out itself, while by his power he restored the sick to health: also in the giving of the Holy Ghost, the hands signified God's presence and power: and in consecrating the priests by this ceremony was and is meant, that those who are admitted into holy orders, are dedicated unto God as sacrifices, and allowed and appointed unto his service.

Thus they requested Christ to lay his hands upon this man to heal him; not that they would prescribe the means or imply a necessity of his touch, but because, as was before observed, they perceived this to be his ordinary course and manner of healing. A pattern for us, after which to model our petitions to God; they must be directed to his usual proceedings: we must not desire him to go out of the common method of acting and to work miracles for us: we must be careful to make his actions the rule of our prayers; but our prayers must not attempt to prescribe his actions: thus if we ask *believing* according to his will, we shall receive: The irregularity and impropriety of our petitions are the cause of our so frequent ill-success: *ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss,* saith St. James, *that ye may consume it upon your lusts and pleasures.*

He who " is always more ready to hear than we to pray, and is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve," shewed his abundant compassion in this respect also, *for whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out.* He not only *touched* the man, but *led him aside from the multitude—put his fingers into his ears, spit and touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven he sighed and saith* unto the Man, *Ephphatha,* that is, *be opened—and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.*

Why our Saviour, who, at other times, healed by

a word or a touch, at present and upon other occasions made use of so many ceremonies, is not ours particularly to inquire, or perhaps wholly to understand: yet thus much we may know, that they had amongst many other (doubtless very wise) ends this purpose to stir up as well those who saw this miracle, as those who now hear it, to a more diligent consideration of the greatness of that human misery and corruption, which can be cured by no other means, by no other method, than by the application of the saving hand of the Son of God; and to bring them and us to a fuller sense of the greatness of his miracles, by a more exact observation of the several circumstances attending: to which end let us consider these several ceremonies, endeavouring to reap all the profit from them we may: and looking through the weakness of these outward means (which were in *themselves* wholly unavailable to any of the purposes for which they were used) to the almighty power of Christ, let us learn to esteem nothing weak and vain, which he hath ordained as an instrument to convey spiritual grace; let us learn to esteem every thing weak and vain, which is separated from his efficacious working, and rested in, as a shadow without the substance, as a body without the soul.—

1st, Then he *leads the man aside from the multitude*, or as the original* may be rendered, *set him apart* so as to be separated from the crowd, and yet standing full before them, that they might all see and behold. Thus some interpret the words, but I should rather conceive—as he gave at the conclusion of the miracle such a charge of secresy to the people—that hereby also he intended privacy, even as in many other of his miracles, purposing to

* Απολαβομενος αυτον απο του οχλου κατ' ιδιαν.

conceal them, like his transfiguration, until his resurrection from the dead. For he would not yet have his kingdom published unto the whole world: *his hour was not yet come*: he had not yet accomplished his sacrifice, he had not yet *broken down the wall of partition*, between the Jews and Gentiles; which was afterwards done, when he gave his disciples commission *to go and teach all nations*.

From this particular, however, we may draw good instruction: as, that if we desire Christ to be our physician, we must retire with him out of the crowd of the world, we *must come out from amongst* the sinful, and have *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*: for without a separation from sin and the world, a separation from our sinful selves,—as well as without holy and devout retirement, in vain shall we expect to find Christ, in vain shall we expect to be healed of all our infirmities: for holy solitude is as dew to the soul. Herein too we are taught, after his divine example, to avoid all vain-glory in our good actions especially, and to seek in them as much privacy as is possible and convenient: that they may be seen and *rewarded openly* of our *heavenly Father*.—Hence the spiritual physicians of the church may usefully learn, how to deal with their patients, taking them aside, and reproving them privately, with meekness and love, "so as if possible one ear or hand might not be conscious to the other."

2dly, Having taken the man aside, *he put his fingers into his ears*—the *fingers* of those bountiful hands, into which the Father hath delivered all things, and which, though nailed to the cross by sinners, are liberal to bestow the richest blessings unto all that ask:—By this sign he shewed both the precious nature of the flesh, which he had taken upon him, that by offering it in sacrifice mankind might be restored to their former health, which

they had lost by sin: and also gave us to know, that his word can neither be heard or understood, unless our ears are first opened by the *finger* of Christ, that is to say, unless the Holy Ghost doth open the ears of our hearts, for the Holy Ghost is in the scriptures expressly called the *finger of God.*" The Spirit of God (says Bishop Hall) is the finger of God: then dost thou, O Saviour, put thy fingers into our ears, when the Spirit enables us to hear effectually. It is only that finger of thy Spirit, O blessed Jesus, that can open our ears and make a passage through them to our hearts: let that finger of thine be put into our ears, so shall our deafness be removed, and we shall hear, not the loud thunders of the law, but the gentle whisperings of thy gracious motions to our souls.

Having thus applied to the ears of the deaf man, 3dly, *he spit* and touched his tongue,* as he did the eyes of the *blind man*—(concerning whom I shall speak at large hereafter.) There *he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.* Wherein we have a beautiful picture of our restoration through Christ, who at first created us: and of the necessity of that new birth, that new creation which is to be had only from him. Irenæus excellently ob-

* St. Cyril observes that hereby he shews the quickening nature of his flesh, and that he hath nothing in him, but what is salutary: so that if he will, even his spittle can bring life to us; all is efficacious, all is full of virtue, says one, in Jesus Christ, because all is united to the eternal word and wisdom. The Roman Catholics use all these ceremonies in *baptism,* for they say that the same is done in baptism for the health of the soul, that Christ did here for the health of the body. But supposing that, we may ask them, what authority or right they have to imitate him in these respects without any command, nay or the least hint from him so to do? The apostles used them not, why then should we? And it is very remarkable, that these very persons who are so scrupulously exact in ceremonies, for which they have no permission, yet transgress a plain command of the same divine Lord, withholding that *cup,* of which he hath ordered ALL to drink!

serves upon this subject, " that God, when about to create man, did not create him by his word only, as he did the brute creation: but he took the *dust* of the earth, and first with his *divine fingers* formed the body, and afterwards *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath* of life, and so man became a *living soul*, made after the image and similitude of God. Now the Son of God, when about to renew and restore this lost image in us, puts his *fingers into the ears*, and spitting, *makes clay*, to shew, that man can be no otherwise restored and renewed to life eternal, than by a *new creation* from the hands of that *almighty God* who created him to this life in the beginning."—Who, therefore, can doubt or be afraid, when we have such and so great a restorer of our nature? For that eternal God, who created us by the Son, redeems us also by the same: by the same he regenerates and creates us anew, and when our bodies shall be reduced to the dust of death, he, notwithstanding their corruption and dissolution, will raise them up again to life eternal, that we may indeed be new creatures, for ever new and for ever blessed in his sight!

Thus having shewn us, that by an application of his hand and Spirit only, our *ears* and *tongue* can be renewed to his glory, he, 4thly, shews the power of his intercession; for *looking up to heaven he sighed**—by the first, reminding, as it were, his hea-

* 'Tis by prayer and secret groans of the heart, says a commentator on the scripture, that Jesus Christ applies his merits, and the church after his example. If to convert a sinner costs Christ so many desires, prayers and sighs, is it not just, it should cost the sinner some? Is it not necessary that his servants called and consecrated to that work, should be men of desires, prayers, and groans? A model of a minister of the church—who, in the exercise of his ministry, in performing the ceremonies of the sacraments, in pronouncing the words and prayers upon sinners, in the name and authority of the church, nay, and of Jesus Christ himself,

venly Father, of the original creation of man, whom his hands made good and complete, that he might hear with his ears the word of God, celebrate his glory with the tongue, be an inhabitant of heaven, and a partaker of everlasting blessedness. And secondly, *he sighed*—for himself took our nature and bare its infirmities: and seeing his works so deformed and ruined, he *groaned in spirit and was troubled*: troubled for us and for that fatal disorder which sin and the devil had brought into the world: *sighing* for our souls under such hard bondage, and thus *looking* to and interceding with his Father for them: and casting his eyes upon the miserable object before him, "now, O Father,—may we suppose our merciful Intercessor sighing and saying—Behold this captive of Satan, his ears are closed, his tongue is tied, and unless thou send help from above, he is for ever lost and undone. Have pity, therefore, O Father, upon these miseries, even as a father pitieth his own children: for they are thine own creatures, they are all the work of thy hands; they themselves do not perceive nor understand the depth of their own wretchedness: but I understand it, and the more I see and know it, so much the more do I sigh for them, because I am their only mediator and advocate. And now, O righteous Father, glorify thou me with thine own glory, O glorify me in the salvation of this afflicted son of Adam."

Thus *looking to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God,* he sighed for compassion towards us, and for an example to us: "for *compas-*

ought to raise his heart toward heaven, groan for those under his hands, and to expect all from him who is the master of all hearts. O Jesus, pronounce upon mine, pronounce upon those of all sinners, pronounce upon the hearts of all those who are to hear thee, and to speak for thee, these words, *be thou opened,* and then thou wilt be obeyed!

sion of those manifold infirmities into which sin hath plunged mankind: of which a pitiful instance was here presented unto him: for *example*, to fetch sighs from us for the miseries of others, sighs of sorrow for them, sighs of desire for their redress: this is not the first time, that our Saviour vented sighs, yea, tears upon human distresses; we are not bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, if we so feel not the smart of our brethren, as to sympathize with them, and to be touched with a generous feeling of their infirmities. For *who is weak*, saith Paul, *and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? We must bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

5thly, Our Saviour saith, *Ephphatha*, that is, *be opened;* and his word was accompanied with power, for *straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.*

His word is commanding——*Be opened*—and whatever he wills, his word can thus perform; here he acts as God, here he shews his divine and almighty arm; sufficiently distinguishing himself from all the prophets and other his servants, who never attempted to work any miracle in their own name, or by their own immediate command. Hence we are taught, how life and health may come to us, namely by the *word.* For Christ obtained for us, yea, and had salvation in himself, but he communicates it by his *word.*—So in the beginning he created us by his word, by his word he yet renews and refreshes us; for life and health come to our souls by his word and by his sacraments; with which Christ doth, as it were, *touch us*, so delivering us from our spiritual maladies, *opening our ears and loosing the string of our tongues;* and thus we are taught, that at Christ's commandment, and at the preaching of his word, we are loosed from the confinement of sin and Sa-

tan, that we should be no more fettered or brought into prison by them.*

Having thus wrought the cure, our Saviour *charged them they should tell no man;* for the same reasons most probably that he withdrew from the multitude with the patient:† though some have imagined, that it was spoken only to those, who did not rightly understand, nor make a proper use of his miracles; supposing that these things concerned only the *diseased in body*, and not considering that Jesus was a physician come to cure every soul of man of its spiritual maladies and infirmities; to those therefore, who talked of his miracles, in this way, as wonderful works of a surprising person risen up amongst them, and who received him not

* The great command of the gospel and grace of Christ poor sinners, says Mr. Henry, is *Ephphatha*, be opened. Grotius applies it thus, that the internal impediments of the mind are removed by the Spirit of Christ, as those bodily impediments were by the word of his power. He *opens the heart*, as he did Lydia's, and thereby opens the ear to receive the word of God, and opens the mouth in prayer and praise. See *Crit. sacr.* in loco.

† See page 54 foregoing, Dr. Stanhope in that truly useful work of his—a comment on the epistles and gospels—has a discourse on this subject. See Vol. iii. p. 397. And he assigns the following reasons for our Saviour's forbidding the divulging his miracles. 1st, To decline, as much as was possible the envy and opposition of the *Pharisees*. 2dly, To secure his life from their malice, till the appointed time. 3dly, To prevent any sedition or tumults among the people. And 4thly, To set us an example of humility, and of doing good for good's sake: which as he well observes, *forbids us ostentation*, and seeking the esteem and admiration of men: 1st, Because this were in effect to make new masters to ourselves, and by a base degeneracy of spirit to become slaves to our fellow-creatures. 2dly, Because St. Paul says, in detestation of popularity, *do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of* Christ. And 3dly, Because the true way to secure the honour and esteem of men, is to *decline* it, when we best *deserve* it. "Good works are so much more worthy to be published, as he that has done them, endeavours most to hide them; the humility of *him* who does a *good* work, and the acknowledgment of him who has received it, may contest one with another without any prejudice to the peace of the heart."

as the Saviour of all mankind, he commanded, that *they should tell no man*, that is, not talk unadvisedly and unwisely of those miracles, the true use and purpose of which they did not conceive, *having eyes and yet seeing not.*—Be that as it may, so far from keeping silence we read, *that so much the more a great deal they published it*,—such is the nature of man—*and were beyond measure astonished, saying, he hath done all things well, he maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak,** *and they glorified the God of Israel.*

It was well nigh impossible for them to keep silence, who must have attributed this desire of secrecy in our Lord solely to modesty and humility; happy indeed would it be if all his followers (and especially his ministers) would learn of him, who was thus meek and lowly; neither acting in their strength when they attempt a spiritual cure, nor proclaiming their own praise, when they have effected it. Then would they likewise do all things well: and there would be that beauty in the manner which no wise man would entirely neglect, even in those actions, which are in themselves most excellent and great.†——Christ's command of secrecy

* See Isai. xxxv. 5. Mr. Pope in his *Messiah* has beautifully applied this prophecy of Isaiah——

> The Saviour comes by ancient bards foretold;
> Hear him, ye *deaf*, and all ye *blind* behold!
> He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
> And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day;
> 'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
> And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear;
> The *dumb* shall sing, the *lame* his crutch forego,
> And leap exulting, like the bounding roe.

† Doddridge. It is a great commendation for a minister, observes one, to say that he has done all things well, that is to say, both with exterior gravity, modesty and decency, and with interior application, piety, and religion; 'tis the way to make the deaf hearken to the truth, and to draw from sinners the acknowledgment and confession of their miseries.

should indeed have been obeyed by them: but when such fruits arose to the people, they could not refrain: for hence they conceived true faith in Christ, and they published this deed for the glorification of God, which was the end of all our Saviour works, for he was born as to bring *peace upon earth*, so *glory to God in the highest*. But this must be no rule for us to disobey any of Christ's commands, even with the best intention, and for what may appear to us the noblest ends. We must not presume to start aside from the plain road of duty, nor to judge our offence venial, because it hath pleased God to bring some good out of evil. "He can often win more glory to himself from our silence, than by our promulgation; a forbidden good differs but little from evil; for what makes our actions to be sins, but prohibitions; Sin is nothing more than a transgression of God's law: our judgment in this respect avails nothing; if he forbid us that which we think good, it becomes as faulty towards us, as that which is originally evil; his will must be our law, and we should ever so resign to him, as to be content, that he take charge of his own glory, while we humbly implore him to give us the grace to take charge of his precepts."*

Thus then we see in this miraculous cure, that it is by the power of Christ only regenerating us, that our ears can be opened, and our tongue loosed to the hearing, understanding and proclaiming the will and wisdom of God. In how wretched a condition was this poor sufferer! unable to hear the cheerful voice of men, cut off from the pleasure of communicating his ideas, in a state of miserable loneliness and solitude! And a lively figure he is of man in his natural state, spiritually deaf and dumb, having ears and yet hearing not, having a

* Bishop Hall.

tongue and yet never using it, but to the worst and vilest of purposes: incapable of hearing the doctrine of salvation and of confessing his own misery.* Man's natural deafness is sufficiently shewn, in that he neither hears, nor regards the severe threats of God in his law, nor the sweet promises and invitations in the gospel, each of which are designed to bring him to repentance: but like the *deaf adder, stoppeth his ears, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely: those ears* which like his heart, *are uncircumcised*, yea, so hardened that *Moses* and the prophets call upon the *heavens* and the *earth*, as if they would sooner hear than man, who so obstinately refuses to hearken to his God. This evil came in amongst us from that day when too credulous *Eve* gave a listening ear to the vile suggestions of the tempter, from whence the ears of her posterity have been unhappily turned from their God.—And for our tongues how tied, how fast locked up are they from speaking either the praise of God, or confessing our own manifold sins and iniquities!—But alas, how glib and ready are they to run volubly on in evil-speaking, reproach, calumny, and trifling of every sort! So deaf are we to God, that we not only refuse to

* An able writer on the *New Testament* observes, "Human nature was incapable to hear the doctrine of salvation and confess its misery, when the Son of God came to seek it, and every sinner left to himself has this double impotency. A man is deaf and dumb, when he refuses to hearken to a truth and is unwilling to submit to it; deplorable deafness, that is voluntary, and will use no means to be cured; for as soon as any one is willing and begs for it, he is no longer deaf or dumb.—Again; The devil stops the mouth of those over whom he has power, when he hinders them from prayer, from confession of sin, and the praise of God. One of the most miserable conditions of a sinner is, that he cannot declare his misery! God in his mercy supplies that defect, by making his servants mourn for them, the church to offer them in its supplications, and some charitable friend to assist them, and solicit his favour.

hearken to the truth, and are unwilling to submit to it, but even to sit half an hour to hear that *word*, which is able to save our souls, is very irksome and grievous to us; a sermon of a *quarter of an hour long at the most* is sufficient for our polite ears, while many hours will not suffice to hear the rant of a player, and the foppery of the stage. So dumb are we, that we have no tongue for his praise, who alone giveth speech, sealed are our lips, and a chill damp strikes us in a moment silent,* as if we had put our hands on a cockatrice den, when spiritual subjects are introduced,—while with gay pleasantry and unceasing alertness we can talk of the foolish pleasures, sins and vanities of a transitory world, of the follies, foibles, offences and affairs of others.

These things, my brethren, ought not so to be; we are thus continually offending against the royal law of *love;* and if we remain thus deaf to God's word; thus dumb to his praise, as neither *believing* on him with our *heart*, nor *confessing* him with our *mouth*—we can neither inherit his kingdom nor partake of his glory. For they alone shall rejoice with him hereafter, who rejoice in him and his word here, who desire to hear that word, as finding it sweet to their souls, and who blessing God for it, and obedient to the rule of life laid down in it, laud him, glorify and extol his great goodness for so precious a treasure—giving " thanks to the bles-

* I doubt not, every serious person has had abundant proofs hereof.—As it is not in my power to enlarge on this topic, so have I little inclination to do so, since my reader will be so much better entertained on the subject by referring to the beginning of the first dialogue of Mr. Hervey's *Theron* and *Aspasio;* a work, in which (though for *my own part*, I cannot consent to the *main position* and the *fundamental* article) yet there are so many beauties and elegancies, and such a strain of piety and humility as will greatly delight and instruct every lover of religious discourses.

sed Jesus, the light of everlasting life, for the table of holy doctrine, which he hath afforded us by his servants, the prophets, apostles and other teachers."

That you may have, 2dly, some sure marks and evidences, whereby to try and examine yourselves, in this respect, seriously and as in the sight and fear of God apply what follows to your hearts.

Is this *word* sweet and pleasant to your souls? have you *tasted* in and by it, that the Lord is *gracious?* hath he opened your ears, and redeemed you from the love of vain conversation to a delight in Christ, and the glad tidings of the gospel! *If any man be in Christ,* says St. Paul, *he* is *a new creature*: And if he be not in Christ a new creature, Christ himself, whose word is to judge us, declares that he *can* never *enter* into the *kingdom of heaven.* If therefore you are sincerely zealous after your souls health, you will not rest satisfied till you know, that you are in Christ new creatures; and of this you may be easily informed: *old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new* to the living member of Christ's body. His *ear is,* first, *redeemed* from its former pleasure in *evil, profane, loose,* and *trifling* conversation: these things are painful and grievous to the regenerate ear: and 2dly, His ear is brought to a pleasure in, and an earnest desire after, hearing the word of God, and all those glorious blessings recorded in it, which he hath vouchsafed to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now every soul that lives can as assuredly and confidently know, whether this be the case with them, as this *deaf man* knew, that he was healed, when he heard the sound of the human voice: rest therefore in perfect satisfaction, that the Spirit of God hath *opened* your ears, if you find them no longer pleased with their former evil conversation, but eagerly listening after the things of God. On the contrary, if the things of God are tedious, irksome

and hateful to your ears, while filthy, profane, idle and trifling conversation is agreeable to you: if the Bible and spiritual books be heavy and tiresome, disagreeable and uneasy to you, while foolish and lewd romances, writings of mere amusement or the like, employ your hours, and ingross your thoughts —then be as well assured, that you are yet *spiritually deaf*, and so not a child of God through faith—for *faith cometh by hearing*—and if not a child, then *not an heir, an heir of God*, nor *a joint heir with Christ.*

Hypocrites and outward professors may indeed pretend to this joy in the word of God; and sorrowful it is to think, that such men abound who place great merit in *hearing*, and are seemingly delighted with the sound of the gospel: none but the searcher of it, can know the *heart*, and none but yourselves can be true judges in this case; for I speak not of false and pretended joy in the word, as a cloak for detestable hypocrisy, but of that real, internal, heart-felt, solid joy and satisfaction, which is the only proof, that the word of God is truly acceptable to us. Where this undissembled satisfaction is found, where this loathing of all corrupt communication, where the word is like dew refreshing to the soul, like honey sweet to the taste, that can belong to no hypocrite; the soul, which experiences such delight is undoubtedly born of God.

But this delight in *hearing*, must, if sincere, *loose* the tongue, and cause it to speak *plainly* and openly in the praise of God.

Nothing will shew the regenerate man more than the tongue—*out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.*—It may indeed be possible (and it is but too common) that a corrupt *heart* may have a smooth, a glossing, and deceitful tongue: but it is impossible that a regenerate heart should have a loose, a time-serving or an irreligious tongue. If,

therefore, your tongue runs at random upon every subject, without considering or regarding what it utters; if your tongue be used, as convenience serves, to flatter, cog, deceive and dissemble; if it be used irreligiously, taking the great and fearful name of the Lord your God in vain, not only by open and notorious cursing and swearing, but, as I fear, is too commonly done by wantonly and causelessly using the name of God and of Christ; nay, and even in the church, by taking that name into your lips, with a most affronting indifference, as if God were not worth regarding, or with an affected devotion, as if he could be pleased with compliments;—if your tongue be used in loose jesting and filthy talking, or employed in the abuse and to the scandal of your neighbour, then be assured you are yet *spiritually dumb, the poison of asps is under your lips*: and if you remain so, if God's praise never dwells on your lips and his glory never sounds from your mouth on earth, never, never most undoubtedly shall his praise and glory resound from them in heaven.

But if on the contrary you *take heed to your ways, that you offend not in your tongue; if out of the good treasure of your heart you bring forth good things, your speech being always with grace, seasoned with salt*—if you never take the name of God into your mouth, but with awful and religious reverence, rejoicing in all opportunities to praise him *for his goodness*, and *to declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men;* if you let *no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers;* if you are rejoiced to speak of your brother's good and labour in true love, to have the *law of kindness dwelling on your tongue:* then rest happy and assured, that the finger of Christ hath touched your tongue, that his divine Spirit hath loosed it from its natural dumbness; let your actions keep pace with

your words, persevere in the way of that truth and holiness, of which you delight to hear and speak, and your ears and tongue shall both be eternally satisfied, these with *hearing* and that with *singing* songs of triumphant *honour and glory to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, for ever and ever Amen.**

Do thou, therefore, O eternal Father, give us, by thy blessed Spirit, the ear to hear and understand thy word, and the tongue to praise and magnify thy name: for it is thou alone, who by thy special grace preventing us dost begin this good work in us: it is thou alone who performest it, and upon whom we must continually wait for grace to help in this time of need: and it is thou alone who shalt finish all with the great *Ephphatha* on that day

* 1 Tim. i. 17.—Many excellent writers have given such large instructions on the right government of the tongue, that I have therefore been the more brief, though perhaps there is scarce any member that requires greater watchfulness: I cannot, however, omit recommending in this place to my reader's practice, the following rules of Bishop Beveridge from his *Private Thoughts*, which is a work too well esteemed to need any poor commendations of mine.

1. I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to speak *much*, lest I often speak *too much*, and not to speak at all, rather than to no purpose.

2. I am resolved, by the grace of God, not only to avoid the wickedness of swearing falsely, but likewise the *very appearance* of swearing at all.

3. I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to make my tongue and my heart go together, so as never to speak with the one, what I do not think with the other.

4. I am resolved, by the grace of God, to speak of other mens *sins only* before their faces, and of their *virtues only* behind their backs.

5. I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to speak reverently to my superiors, humbly to my inferiors, and civilly to all.

Blessed and happy will that man be, who shall govern his tongue according to these rules: *for if any man offend not in word*, saith Saint James, *the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle his whole body*. See James iii. 2, &c.

when thou shalt say to the graves, *Be opened*, and shalt cause all those to arise and enter thy glorious kingdom, whose ears and tongues thou hast before opened, and given them to hear and receive thy word in their hearts, to confess it with their lips, and to manifest it in their lives. And that we may all obtain this inestimable blessing, God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth ever, one God world without end. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XII.

BLIND BARTIMEUS.

PART I.

LUKE xviii. 42, 43.

And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee.—And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

THE description of the idols in scripture very exactly suits with the natural, unregenerate man; *they have mouths but they speak not; eyes have they but they see not; they have ears but they hear not; noses have they but they smell not; they have hands but they handle not; feet have they but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.*—For though created in the image and similitude of God, in righteousness and true holiness, Man through original corruption hath lost all his perfections, and hath neither an ear to hear, a tongue to speak, or an eye to see God's glory, and his soul's good, unless these powers and faculties of his soul be renewed and restored by the regenerating grace of God in Christ. Hence before his coming into the

world it was foretold of him by the prophet, that he *should open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, make the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing:* which he not only fully verified, when present upon earth, but even to this day performs by the same divine power, exerting itself upon the *souls* of men, which at that time he employed upon their bodies, to shew at once his ability to cure our spiritual maladies, and the necessity and nature of the cure.*—For we shall greatly mistake the use of his miracles, and lose the advantage which they were designed to convey always, even unto the end of the world, to those who hear of them, if we do not apply them to our own souls, consider them as descriptive of our spiritual diseases, and as directing us to our infallible and all-sufficient remedy.

I have endeavoured to present some of them to your attention in this view; and last Sunday particularly proposed to advise you of the absolute necessity of regeneration, or a new life to all the faculties of your souls from the new life given by our Saviour to the deaf and the dumb, the blind and the lame, &c. who sought to him for relief, and who present us with a striking picture of ourselves in our natural state, deaf to God, dumb to his praise, blind to his love and glory, and without hands or feet to do, and to move as he hath commanded. And in order hereto, the miracle wrought by our Saviour upon a *deaf* and *dumb* man, brought to him, was first considered, and then some sure marks and evidences given you, whereby you may infallibly know, whether your ears have been *opened* by the *finger*, the Spirit of God, to a complacence in hearing his word; whether your tongue hath

* St. Austin finely observes, *non minus necessaria est mentis illuminatio, quàm oculis lumen.*

been loosed by his divine power to the service of his glory, and a delight in his praise.—I proceed next to consider the miracle wrought by him upon the poor blind beggar, who fervently craved his relief; and having explained the circumstances of it, I will according to the former order, give you some marks whereby you may examine and see whether your eyes have been opened by Christ, whether you can truly say, *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*

There is no image under which the scriptures more frequently represent man's natural misery, than that of *blindness* and *darkness, having eyes and yet seeing not;* and so in return none more common than that of opening the eyes, bringing to the light, &c. whereby they declare to us our regeneration or spiritual recovery. Hence Satan is called the prince of *darkness,* and in opposition, Christ is called the *light,* the *light* of life, the *light* of the world. Hence all the works of sin are called works of darkness, and all the new fruits of holiness, *light* and the *armour of light.* And we, when born again by the grace of Christ, are said to be enlightened, even by his divine power, who is the light of the world, and whose children we are, when we *walk in the light,* or *keep his holy commandments,* and so *have fellowship with him.* Jesus repeated it that he was the *light of the world,* when about to restore sight to the man born blind, as recorded John ix. of which miracle I shall speak fully hereafter, and it will be found to have many similar circumstances to that of which I spoke in the former discourse: St. Mark in his gospel* records a miracle in its circumstances also very similar, and which emphatically declares, that as by him who created us we must be regenerated, as by the Spirit and power of Jesus our ears must be

* Mark viii. 22.

opened, and our tongues loosed, so by the same Spirit and power our eyes must be opened, and we restored from darkness to light. *He cometh unto Bethsaida*, saith the Evangelist, and *they bring unto him a blind man, and besought him to touch him: and he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town* (even as he did the deaf and dumb man from the multitude), *and when he had spit upon his eyes, and put his hands upon them*, (as he did upon the ears and tongue of the deaf and dumb) *he asked him, if he saw ought: and he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking; after that he put his hands on his eyes again and made him look up, and he was restored and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town:* (giving the same charge of secrecy, that he had before done in the case of the deaf and dumb man.)

But this miracle, whereof St. Luke speaks in the chapter, whence the text is taken, and of which St. Matthew and St. Mark speak also, seems to have been of a more public and remarkable kind.

There were two blind men, St. Matthew tells us, who sat by the way side, begging, as Jesus with his disciples, and a great number of people attending, went out of Jericho: one of whom seems to have been well known; his name, St. Mark informs us, was BARTIMEUS, the meaning of which appellation he adds, the son of Timæus: and some commentators have supposed that this Timæus had been a person of note, whose son, by a complication of calamities, fell both into poverty and blindness; However it seems certain from St. Mark's manner of speaking of him, that he was a person well known, and constantly seen by many in that public place, where he sat begging; and was therefore the more proper person, upon whom Jesus might display his

almighty power, and convince his gainsayers.—Hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant? and they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by: upon which he cried with great fervour and earnestness, saying, *Jesus, thou Son of* David, *have mercy on me*—But they which went before, rebuked him, nay, and charged him to hold his peace and not thus trouble the master; but he cried so much the more, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*

It is plain from hence that this blind man had before heard of Jesus of Nazareth, or he could never have made this lively confession of him, acknowledging him the expected Messiah, the seed of David, the Lord and Redeemer of Israel. For this confession (as will be seen more fully in the subsequent sermon, concerning the *Faithful Canaanite,*) contained the true and perfect knowledge of Christ, both as to his person and as to his office; for herein he is acknowledged to be both God and Man: God, first when called upon to *have mercy:* for it is the property of God, nay, and in his power only, to have mercy on miserable sinners; 2dly, when particularly addressed by the appellation of Lord, which is the known translation of Jehovah in the Bible, the peculiar name of God. Man, when called the *Son of David,* which was an universally received title of the Messiah, as born of the seed and family of David, as *made of the seed of* David *according to the flesh.* As to this office he calls him Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer of his people from all those sins, into which they fell through and from Adam; he offers his prayers with the profoundest *humility*: not building upon any merit of his own, not pretending to any worth or deserving in himself whereby he might claim this favour from the son of David: he only saith, "*Have mercy on me*"

—I confess, O Lord, that I am a miserable sinner, and that my manifold offences have most righteously deserved this punishment of blindness from God: but I trust and have strong hope in thy goodness which hath invited all that labour to come to thee, and promised mercy to returning sinners."—I need not here observe that this is a lesson for us, in our approaches to Christ, to whom we must draw nigh in this faith and humility, confessing him at once the God able, and the Man willing to save, as well as the blessed Jesus, who came into the world on this benign and glorious purpose to redeem and restore us worthless sinners. Our excellent church teacheth us constantly thus to approach him; our prayers in this spirit continually ascend before him; the great business we have to do, is to take especial heed, that we do not mock him by offering him the fruits of our lips only, while our hearts are far from him.

Very perfect was this blind man's confession of faith; his prayers were offered up too with the right spirit, that of humility, which will always incline the ears of the Almghty to hearken. But as Satan hath always some hindrances to throw in the way of penitents, upon their approaches to the Great Deliverer, so do we see them pictured in the case of Bartimeus. For they who went before *rebuked and charged* him to hold his peace. They supposed, that he was praying thus importunately for common alms only, from this compassionate Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore were for preventing his troublesome clamour. But the more they charged him, unwilling to be deprived of that assistance from which he had conceived so great hope, so much the more earnestly he sent his voice after him whom with his eyes he was unable to behold. He repeated his prayer louder and louder: fearing lest

Jesus should be at too great a distance to hear him or should be prevented from so doing by the noise of the people. Still he repeats his pathetic prayer, Jesus, *thou Son of David, have mercy on me*—A prayer suitable to all our necessities; and which if we use with the fervour of this poor man,* spite of all the impediments and suggestions of Satan, attending upon the *place* where he *passeth by*, upon the place where his divine word is read and preached, and his holy ordinances rightly and duly administered, we need not fear but he will do, as we request, *shew mercy on us*, and crown us with his compassions, as he did Bartimeus.

For he stood still, and commanded him to be brought unto him; upon which the people called him, saying, *Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee:* and he casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus; to whom when he was come near, Jesus asked him, saying, *what wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* and he said, *Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

No wonder the blind man was thus eager to rise and hasten to Jesus, when he heard his divine voice calling him; and herein he furnisheth us with an instructive lesson, that we should arise no less eagerly, no less gladly *cast away our cloak*, *lay aside*

* There is no occasion, says Quesnelle, to move this blind man to cry out, The love of sight is a sufficient motive—He who does not pray desires nothing; a strong desire either causes a man to pray much, or is itself a fervent prayer. We may judge of our heart by our prayer, without any fear of deceiving ourselves. We are certainly insensible of our spiritual diseases, when we do not find ourselves inclined and moved to pray: and we are blind to our miseries, when we do not seek at all to obtain mercy. The serious christian desirous of reading the *New Testament* with profit will find perhaps few writings more conducive thereto, than this author's *Moral Reflections* on the *New Testament*, translated by Russel.

every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and without all hesitation or delay follow Christ in the way, *run with patience the race that is set before us*, whenever he calls us by his word and Spirit. Our repentance must not he deferred from day to day, but *to-day if we will hear his voice*, we must take care not to *harden our hearts:* now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation; the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The night cometh when no man can work: if we harden our hearts to-day, while it is called to-day, we may chance to hear in the midst of our worldly wisdom and providence—*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.* If we would come to Christ, we must not only arise speedily, but also cast aside the filthy cloak of our corrupt conversation,* must *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world:* he will make a wretched appearance in the eyes of Christ, who dares to approach him covered with pride, malice, covetousness, drunkenness, lust, or any of the evil works of the flesh. For this is a truth, which all the wiles of men and all the arts of Satan can never gainsay, that Christ hath no fellowship with Belial, light with darkness, sin with the gospel, and whoever professes that gospel, or presumes upon God's mercy, while living in the practice of sin, let him know most assuredly, that he hath neither part nor lot in this matter: since the first step to Christ is true repentance, *a casting away our old cloak*, an utter abjection of all our former sins and iniquities. If doing this with the blind man, and in true humility, conscious of our own unworthiness, approaching to Christ the Saviour of our souls, then may we confidently make it our petition to him, *that we*

|| *Sic faciendum est iis,* says Clarius, *qui lumen a Christo accipere ex animo quærunt.*

may receive our sight: daily praying, "Grant me, O Father, grant me to receive my sight, that my eyes may be opened to see and *know*, by sincere faith, *thee the true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, who is the way, the truth, and the life:* Give me to see the vanity of this world, and the greatness of my own manifold offences; that I may truly deplore them, and have my eyes fixed upon that eternal state, into which I can enter only through thy mercy and the merits of him who lived and died for sinners; and give me, O my God, give me when these eyes shall be closed in death, give me to awaken *with thy likeness*, to *see* thee face to face, to appear in righteousness before thee, and fully to be satisfied with the glorious vision.

Thus if we in faith unfeigned, profound humility, and sincere repentance put up our prayers to the throne of grace, the issue will then be as successful as it was to the blind man: to whom Jesus replied, touched with compassion towards him, *Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee, and immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

Thus you see (as in all these cases through the gospel) the salvation and recovery of this man is ascribed to faith: and so it ever must be, for no *works* and *deservings* of ours can ever *merit* or *obtain* salvation from the hands of God. And in this sense it is, that we are said to be *justified by faith only*, not as if *works* were unnecessary thereto,† but

† The truth is, *works* cannot be separated from sincere *faith*, for that *faith* will be allowed on all hands not to be *justifying*, which knows nothing of *real repentance*, self-humiliation, *love to God* and Christ for the gift of everlasting life, &c. &c. See the first part of the *Homily on Faith.* I know, that there are many who will be apt to clamour as if the very foundation of the gospel was moved, by asserting the necessary concomitance of *works* with

as being *wholly excluded* from any share or part in the merit of it, which belongs wholly to Christ, who is exceeding jealous of his honour, and will give no part of it to another; *he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him.*—And vain are all our pretensions to merit: for we can merit nothing—poor unprofitable servants at best—in the sight of a just and holy Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier: but, as this blind man hath set us the example, must plead and apply to his mercy, if we desire his favour.

The faith whereby we are justified, is a living principle, always accompanied with sincere repen-

faith; but the truth will always stand the test, and if these men will seriously and impartially consider the subject, I doubt not, but they will be led to see, that *all faith without* works is dead, a body without breath, a mere carcase. Neither is the honour of our most blessed Redeemer, or the freedom of gospel salvation injured hereby, nay rather to each the due, even all honour and glory is given. For from Christ alone, and his meritorious righteousness flows the free offer of pardon and peace and the means of everlasting glory! *For by grace are we saved, through faith: and that not of ourselves,* or by any merit or means of our own: *It is the gift,* the free unmerited gift of God: *not of works, lest any man should boast.* No *works of ours could procure,* no works of ours *rested* in as meritorious, no righteousness of our own *can procure* salvation for us. It is wholly of *grace.* But this by no means excludes our performance of the evangelical conditions—We must *repent, convert, believe, be baptized, and obey,* &c. we must perform, according to our church, the three things promised by our *sureties* for us, *renounce the* devil, &c.—*See the Catechism*; or we have no right to expect, that God will perform his part of that *covenant* which is made in Christ Jesus, and the making of which with man, when a condemned rebel, yea and also enabling him by the Spirit to fulfil the conditions of it, is such an act of mercy, of *free grace* and unspeakable love, as can never be sufficiently admired, and for which eternity will scarce suffice to pay everlasting and unceasing praise to the blessed Trinity, the *three divine Persons,* Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who have wonderfully joined to testify their love to fallen unworthy man; for which all love, all glory, all honour be unto this adorable Trinity in Unity now and for ever. *Amen.*

tance on one hand, and universal obedience on the other; a faith founded on the truth of the promises of God in Christ, applying those promises to ourselves; and, as being fully persuaded that what he hath promised he is also able to perform, acting in as immediate conformity to all those promises, as if they had the most clear substance and real existence, as if we had the most sensible evidence of them possible.—And this was exactly the faith, which our Saviour declares, saved (from his blind and sinful state) this blind man. For it was first in the heart a firm and full persuasion of his power and mercy, and so a confidence in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of David, the God-man, the expectation of Israel, both able and willing to save: and, secondly, It was also in the mouth a good and true confession. For faith in the heart must sound forth from the mouth; and therefore St. Paul thus describes it, *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For, &c.* That faith is not true or availing with God, which sounds only from the mouth and has no root in the heart, and that is but a dead cowardly faith, which lies in the heart, and dares not confess Jesus to the glory of God the Father. This blind man's faith was both in heart and mouth; and it was an obedient faith, for when Christ called, see how readily he obeyed his word, yea, with what eagerness he hastened towards him; and it was persevering and constant; for though the people rebuked him, he yet ceased not, but cried so much the more, *Jesus, thou, &c.* And when Christ had opened his eyes and performed his desire, he did not then, like the nine thankless lepers, depart without glorifying God; but he followed Jesus in the way, and that with the best intent, to *give glory to the God of heaven,* who had done so great things

for him; nay, and even all the people, we find, were so struck with this surprising miracle, that they too, hard of heart as they were, when they saw it *gave praise unto God.*

Such is *justifying* faith: and be well assured, that a *faith* which is not attended with these fruits, (how nice and subtle definitions soever men may draw out) is not the true justifying faith, whereby alone you can be saved, pardoned and esteemed as righteous in the sight of God. If you have the true faith in Christ and his gospel, that faith is founded upon *repentance*, sincere sorrow for and utter forsaking of sin, and is attended with humility, ardent prayer, and uniform obedience, a following of Jesus in the way, and living to the glory of God. And these are the infallible tests of faith, these are the necessary conditions of justification; if you build upon any thing beside, you greatly delude your own souls, have no authority from scripture, and are in danger of eternal punishment. For nothing but true *humility*, an utter rejection of all self-merit and righteousness, a fervent application to Jesus Christ, a laying aside all sin, and living in exact obedience to all his holy laws, *keeping a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards man*, can in this world bring you comfort, and in the world to come joy everlasting.

And this is the immediate doctrine of our own church, (however that doctrine may be wrested and perverted by some) who in her eleventh article of *justification* asserts, *That we are accounted righteous before God* ONLY *for the* MERIT *of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,* BY *faith, and not* FOR *our own works or deservings;* where you see *faith* is immediately opposed to *works* of *merit* or *deservings*, all of which are, very scripturally, excluded from any part in our *justification*: as indeed they must be, even according to *right reason* itself: for how can

creatures, sinful imperfect creatures, *merit* at the hand of their *Creator*,—for *what have we that we did not receive?*—The homily on Justification fully expresses, what I have been attempting to establish; "In our justification is not only God's mercy and grace, but also his justice, which the Apostle calls the justice of God, and it consisteth in paying our ransom, and fulfilling of the law; and so the grace of God doth not shut out the justice of God, in our justification: but only shutteth out the justice (or righteousness) of man, that is to say, the justice of *our works*, as to be *merits* of *deserving* our justification. And therefore St. Paul declareth nothing upon the behalf of man concerning his justification, but only a *true* and *lively faith*, which nevertheless is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God. And yet *that faith (note)* doth not *shut out* repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God to be *joined with faith in every man that is justified*, but it shutteth them out from the *office of justifying*." And again—"Nevertheless this sentence that *we be justified by faith only*—is not so meant, that the said justifying faith is ALONE in man, without true repentance, hope, charity, dread and the fear of God, at *any time* or *season*, &c. But this saying is spoken to take away clearly all *merit of our works*, as being unable to *deserve* justification at God's hand—Christ himself *only* being the cause meritorious thereof."*

* Every attentive reader of the *Homilies* will observe numberless passages to the same purpose—particularly in the first book: all of which abundantly prove, that the great point our reformers were endeavouring to establish, was the justification of sinners by the alone merits of Jesus Christ—to the exclusion of all works of *merit* or *deserving*, but not to the exclusion of *good works*, as necessary conditions of that justification. Bishop Bull, in his incomparable *Harmonia*, &c. hath fully and indisputably settled thi point, and I heartily wish some student in divinity, who has lei sure and abilties, would translate that excellent work from its ori

I have been the more explicit upon this subject, because it is of great consequence, that our apprehensions be right in this respect, and because we have in this blind man, whose faith our Lord expressly declares, saved him, a full manifestation of the nature of justifying faith; which causeth us to disclaim all merit and deserving, and to come to Christ the Saviour of the soul, with a *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!* which raiseth in us a loathing, abhorrence, and casting away of sin, and maketh us obedient to Christ's word, *following* him in the way, and *glorifying God.*

Some from this history have formed the following allegory.—This blind man may represent all the human race *blind* through ignorance of the truth, a *beggar* through the want of all virtues. It formerly sat by the way-side, begging from the philosophers and teachers of this world, the alms of saving doctrine, but still continued blind and a beg-

ginal Latin, by which he would be doing real service to the cause of Christ: however for those who are able to read it in the original, there is a very brief account of it in the pious and judicious Mr. Nelson's life of the Bishop, p. 89, &c. which may be of service. But as this authority may not prevail with some, I will beg leave to recommend Richard Baxter's *Aphorisms* on *Justification*, to which, I doubt not, many will pay regard: and if after all they should be inclined still to doubt, or if more especially any sincere Christians should find reason to differ in opinion with me on this much-controverted, though I think very clear, point, I am open to conviction upon reasonable evidence, and though I will never dispute with any man, yet will I readily give every man's opinion a serious examination. Richard Baxter in his 39th proposition observes, "that *faith is the summary condition of the gospel, as love is the fulfilling of the law.* And 41st, From what hath been said, it appeareth in what sense faith only justifieth, and in what sense works justify: namely, 1st, Faith only justifieth, as it implieth all other parts of the condition of the new covenant. 2dly, Faith only justifieth, as the great master duty of the gospel, to which all the rest are reducible. 3dly, Faith only, doth not justify in opposition to the works of the gospel: but those works do always justify as the secondary remote parts of the condition of the covenant." I know, says he, "that this is the doctrine, which

gar. Christ therfore *passing** through the way of this world, that is taking upon him the defects and infirmities of human nature, arose a new light to the race of men, and restored sight to them by the word of the gospel, from which we conceive firm faith in Christ Jesus, and ardent invocation of his name. For although they, who went before, such as were the synagogue of the Jews and the sect of the Pharisees, may rebuke and charge us to hold our peace——yet, let us not suffer ourselves to be moved from our conceived confidence in Christ; so shall we follow him rejoicing from the earthly and changeable Jericho even to the heavenly Jerusalem, *the city which hath foundations*, there shall we be illuminated with the splendor of the Lamb and there glorified with the glory of God for ever.

Thus I have gone through this miracle and should now according to the order proposed, 2dly, consider the case of the *spiritually blind*, and give you some evident marks and tokens, whereby you may know whether your eyes have been opened by the power of Christ, and your apprehensions of spiritual things illuminated, by his light shining upon

will have the loudest outcries raised against it, and will make some cry out *Heresy, Popery, Socinianism!* and what not? For my own part the Searcher of hearts knoweth, that not singularity, affectation of novelty, nor any good will to popery, provoketh me to entertain it; but that I have earnestly sought the Lord's direction upon my knees, before I durst adventure on it: and that I resisted the light of this conclusion as long as I was able: but a man cannot force his own understanding, if the evidence of truth force it not, though he may force his pen or tongue to silence or dissembling."—See also proposition 44, where he shews that this doctrine is no whit derogatory to Christ and his righteousness.

* See St. Jerom on the place: Jesus *passes* in this life for the sake of sinners, because they themselves *pass* away, and must therefore make use of the time while they have it.—The opportunities of salvation are continually *passing* away: it is the greatest folly imaginable to let them slip by our delays: and we are far from doing it, when the cure of our bodies is the thing in question. Q.

your former darkness: whether you may safely say, without deluding your own souls, that *whereas ye were, sometimes darkness, now are ye light in the Lord,* and that *ye walk as children of the light;* but the time at present prevents: however each one of us, from what hath gone before, may have some undeniable evidences of the state of his soul. If a concern for its welfare hath never entered our thoughts, if we have never felt the misery nor deplored the guilt of sin: if we have never seen our own unworthiness, nor in deep humility applied to the root and offspring of David, Jesus the anointed Saviour of our souls, with that fervent prayer, *Jesus thou Son of David, have mercy on me:* if we have not arisen from our state of sin at his call, put off the old man with his deeds, and had our eyes opened to divine and spiritual objects: if we have not followed Jesus in the way, observing his blessed precepts, and conforming ourselves to his meek and lowly example; if we have not made God's glory the end of our actions and the subject of our praise, then as sure as God is truth, so sure may we be that we are yet in *darkness,* and a state of condemnation: a state horrible indeed, and from which unless we be delivered, to end only in the darkness of a worse, a darkness without one gleam of light, where we must dwell through miserable eternity! ——Oh that these terrors of the Lord would persuade men—or rather, that the unspeakable love of Jesus would incline all your hearts to seek and sue to him, for grace and deliverance, with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption! You cannot but know, whether these marks are found in your souls or not; if they be wanting, as the word of God is true, so are you without his covenant in Christ, as yet excluded from it—follow therefore the example of this blind man, acknowledge and deplore your misery and darkness before this all

sufficient Saviour; cry to him with fervent importunity, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on me,—have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David*—implore him to *anoint your eyes with his eye-salve, that you may see.* Fly to and lay strong hold of his sacred promises, and plead with him for his death and sufferings' sake to restore and save that poor soul of yours, for which he was contented to be betrayed into the hands of cruel enemies! Be not backward at his call; form not half resolutions of repentance, but as you come to his church, nay, and bear his name and so must hear of him, determine to arise at his call, to cast away your cloke, to abandon all your sins, *to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is renewed in righteousness and true holiness.* Be fully persuaded, that whosoever so humbleth himself before him, whoever so crieth to him in sincere faith, whoever so striveth to follow him and obey his precepts, shall never pray nor strive in vain: the grace of God shall be plentifully given to assist; only persevere, wait God's good pleasure, be diligent to obey all his commands, and rest confident, that what he hath promised, he is not only able but willing to perform—*for who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded?**

Thus seeking you will find: for those who are already so blest, if you can perceive these marks of grace in your souls, if you can cast away gladly all self-merit, and self-righteousness, and delight to trust for salvation in the all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ; if in deep humility you can and do lay

* Ecclus. ii. 10. Look at the generations of old, and see: did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise, that called upon him? for the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering and very pitiful, and forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction.

your hand on your hearts and say, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me*—if you have forsaken your dead and filthy state of sin, and have arisen at the call of Jesus, through his grace, and are striving to obey him in all things: if you are labouring to learn of him, who is meek and lowly of heart: if his testimonies are dear, yea, sweet and pleasant to your souls, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: if God's glory be the single eye of your soul: if you are warring with all your might against your inbred passions and corrupt affections, and are daily and earnestly longing to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living,—then to those who can thus say, and who thus do, safely may we pronounce in the words, and by the authority of our Master, *Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.* Return thanks and glory to God, who hath thus given thee the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him *be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord!*

And may God, of the riches of his grace, increase the number of such; and grant that all of you may be found in that number: may he cause you to rejoice in the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus, and to use your utmost *diligence* and exactest care to make that *calling and election sure.* Amen.

DISCOURSE XIII.

BLIND BARTIMEUS

PART II.

LUKE xviii. 42, 43.

TO open the eyes of the blind, and to bring from darkness to light, was always acknowledged one of the divine offices of the Messiah; David said of him, many years before his appearance in the flesh, *The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind*: and the prophet Isaiah foretold in that scripture which Christ declared in the synagogue of Nazareth to be fulfilled in him, *That the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.**—Had this been confined to corporeal sight, the benefit of it as to mankind in general, would have been but small: seeing it was but a few, whom he thus restored to sight, and that in one particular part of the world, and for a short season only. But his blessings and benefits were more diffuse and general: his light universal as that of the sun, and offered to illumine *every*

* Isaiah lxi. comp. Luke iv. 16.

man (as every man is born in darkness) *who cometh into the world.* To confirm our faith, to evidence his divine power and mission, he gave many sensible proofs, many pledges and earnests, if I may so call them, by opening the eyes of the naturally blind; that he was the God,* able to open the eyes closed in spiritual darkness, which *seeing, could not perceive*, which dwelt in thick night and in the *valley of the shadow of death.*

Amongst the rest, the son of Timeus by true faith, put forth in fervent importunate prayer, was saved from his natural blindness, and had at once the eyes of his body and of his soul opened to a true sight and sense of himself and of that great Restorer, whom he followed in the way *glorifying God.* And many years after, by the same divine power of the same divine Healer, St. Paul declares, that the Ephesians, to whom he wrote, were restored from spiritual darkness and blindness to light in the Lord: *Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord:* that their eyes, before closed in thick night, had been opened *through the tender mercy of God, whereby the day-spring from on high had visited them, to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet in the way of peace; who were before dead in trespasses and sins, and who walked according to the course of this world, being by nature the children of wrath.*†

And as all men, no less than this Bartimeus and these Ephesians, are by nature in this state of darkness and blindness, the eye of their soul having been put out, the lamp of God's spiritual light having been extinguished by the fall, except they are restored and have this blindness removed by him, who *lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, and who is *the light of the world*;—they

* See Gen. xxi. 19. 2 Kings, vi. 17.

† Ephesians v. 8. Luke i. 78, 79. Ephesians ii. 2.

must perish in thick darkness for ever, for ever remain in this dismal *valley*, this fearful *shadow of death*. *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* They who hear this call, and, in obedience to it, arise and leave their sins, as Bartimeus threw aside his cloak, and arose at the call of Jesus: they, who come to him in full dependance upon his power and mercy, shall experience the truth of his promise; he, as he hath said, will give them light, will fully and clearly manifest himself and all things necessary to salvation to their souls.—When Bartimeus was blest with his desire, and had received his sight, he could have no doubt of the blessing, he could have no doubt of his restoration to sight: and in like sort, the man spiritually blind, when his eyes are opened by the divine light, has tokens and proofs as evident; he can tell with equal clearness and certainty, that *whereas he was darkness, now is he light in the Lord*, that whereas *he was blind, now he sees:* he can know as convincingly, for he cannot be ignorant that he no longer *walketh in darkness*, but as a child of the light, having ceased from the works of sin, and doing all the works of God: for hereby, says St. John, *do we know, that we know him, if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, if we keep his commandments; for he that saith, he abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

To make this matter as evident as possible, we will consider and compare the case of the naturally and spiritually blind; see to what different views and objects each of their eyes are opened; and how different as their sight, so their walking is also: whence we shall have some marks whereby to try and examine ourselves, whether we are children of darkness or of light—whether we can safely say to

the comfort of our souls, that the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to us, that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

I. First, then, I will speak briefly of the case of Bartimeus, or the man *naturally blind*, and,

II. Refer and apply to the case of the man spiritually blind.

Though the sun shone with its usual brightness, and the heavens were adorned with their accustomed azure, yet their beauties and lustre were utterly unknown to blind Bartimeus, clouds and ever-during darkness surrounding his sightless eye-balls: and an universal blank presenting itself instead of the fair book of nature, and the cheerful face of man. Nay, even the image and form of that blessed Jesus whose aid he so fervently invoked, was entirely unknown to him, nor was he a less stranger even to his own form and features: he had never beheld,* and so could have no idea of his own

* It hath been supposed by some, that Bartimeus had not been blind from his birth, but lost his sight by accident afterwards: however as this is only supposition, I may be allowed to *suppose* the contrary, and be the case as it will with regard to Bartimeus, I speak of him here in the general only as a *blind man*, a man blind from his birth. I cannot help introducing here Milton's most pathetic description of his own blindness. *Parad. Lost.* B. 3. v. 40.

> Thus with the year
> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks or herds, or human face divine:
> But clouds instead, and ever during dark
> Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
> Presented with an universal blank
> Of nature's works, to me expung'd and rais'd,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out!

natural face, or of the visage of man, the *human face divine,* over which the Deity has spread a ray, though now dim, of his own glory. And as thus cut off from the sight and knowledge of the magnificence of the heavens, the brightness of the sun, the beauties of nature, the face of Jesus, of man, of himself, so too was he equally ignorant of the way wherein he should go: unable to guide and direct himself, yea and in danger of stumbling against any obstacle, or falling into any pit, which should lie before him: unable to see the end and place whereto he would reach, and to steer his course rightly to his own home and desired habitation.—How dismal a state was this, how horrible a condition is such blindness, a *living death;* yea, how much more dreadful is it than thought can fancy or pen describe! How exceeding all imagination then must the blessing have been, since pleasures and benefits always rise in just proportions to torments and evils—what a cause of eternal gratitude was here, when by the divine power of Jesus, a living ray was poured on his dead and dark eye-balls, opened now to a view of heaven, of Jesus, of himself, of his way and his own habitation!—Exactly similar is the case,

II. With the *spiritually blind:* with each one of us by nature, who *have eyes and see not,* who have no eyes to see (though we do indeed behold the heavens and the sun) the great inhabitant of those heavens, and *him,* whom those heavens declare to

> So much the rather thou, celestial light,
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and diffuse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.

See too his *Samson Agonistes* at the beginning.

us, the Lord our God,* the *Sun of righteousness*, the *King of glory:* To *ourselves* also we are no less strangers, ignorant of, and blind to the true condition of the soul, to our fallen and condemned estate: and as thus ignorant of God and of ourselves, so are we no less blind to the way wherein we should go, to the duty which we owe to God and to man: and to the eternal *home*, the sure *habitation* of life or death, towards which we are continually travelling from the moment of our birth to the day of our death; the miseries or joys of which we have neither eyes to see nor perceive.—But soon as by the almighty power of God through faith in Christ, our eyes are opened, new views break in upon our souls as upon the eyes of the *naturally* blind, and we have then a new *sight*, or new *apprehensions* of *God*, of *man*, or *ourselves*, of our *duty*, and our *eternal home*. To shew which a little more particularly, let us consider each circumstance.

1. The man whose eyes are opened, hath new *views* of *God;* views very different from those which he had before; apprehensions of the Deity very much changed from his former ones: for I propose not to take into the present consideration, such as have gone so great lengths, as to say, *there is no God*,† (because I believe there have been very

* See Psalm xix. 1. comp. Rom. i. 19, 20.

† Psalm xiv. 1. I apprehend the expression in this psalm refers principally to practical atheism—and it is observable, that the *fool* here described, only says *in his heart*, he dare not pronounce it with his lips—but it may be questioned, whether the *folly* of this person doth not consist in something other than denying the being of a God, since the original word for *God*, in this place is אלהים *Elohim*, which is plural, expressive of the *Trinity*: and so possibly this *fool* might be like those who now deny a Trinity in Unity, and of consequence the *whole œconomy* of grace, while they set up

few, if any atheists, strictly speaking, at all) but such as have had some notions or ideas of God before, though very false, wrong and dangerous: such only as natural religion teaches, or perhaps a perverse and *merely-rational* understanding of the scriptures. The man possibly believed before, with the devils, that there was one *great, good,* and *supreme Being,* so unbounded in *mercy,* as to have no degree of *justice,* no abhorrence for, or at least no anger at foul, filthy, and rebellious sin; no purity, no holiness, nothing separate from sinners; And though he might have allowed, in speculation at least, the attributes of the *Supreme,* yet was he never moved by his goodness to be grateful, by his patience to repent, by his omnipresence to fear and to guard against, and by his omnipotence to fly from sin, and as to his notions of a Trinity in Unity, of the Father, Son and Spirit, three equal in glory, in time, in majesty and power, he either is confident enough to declare himself no *Trinitarian,* to treat with contempt the eternal Sonship of Christ, and with blasphemy the grace of the Spirit as downright madness and enthusiasm:* Or he hath such apprehensions of redemption, as have hardened him in guilt, causing him to suppose, that Christ's atonement is a licence for sin, seeing he hath paid the debt, and fully satisfied: or such, as have given

one supreme being, in opposition to the *Jehovah Elohim—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, but one God.*

* I have chosen to make use of these words, as I have heard them out of the mouth of some, who yet have been *baptized* in the *name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*—and call themselves,—strange to think, and hard to believe,—call themselves *Christians,* though denying the divinity of Christ, and the necessity of that *unction which teacheth us all things!* And I have good hope, that if these sheets should fall into their hands, they may see as in a glass, their great impiety and folly, and come, by the grace of God, unto a better mind, for which unto those thus unhappily blinded, I doubt not all sincere Christians will constantly pray.

him not much consideration or concern, seeing he can hear, read, and talk both of the Saviour and the Spirit, with as much indifference, as if the all-sufficient merits of the one and the sanctifying grace of the other were matters at a distance, and things of very little moment to him. But in truth the apprehensions of unregenerate and carnal men, with regard to the *Lord God*, whether they be professed and open sinners, or mere pharisaical and formal professors, are so very different, so unlike each other, and all so far from the truth, that it is impossible to lay down any certain criterion of their opinions; however we may say without dispute, that they are all void of *humility*, of *love*, and of *self-application*. And in reference to these we may clearly see, how the apprehensions are truly renewed, when the Spirit of God opens the eyes.

The great and glorious majesty, the spotless purity, the exact and sin-avenging justice of the Almighty King of heaven, strikes the awakened soul with the most awful sense of that divine being, and with the deepest acknowledgment of its own littleness and impurity ;† the infinite mercy, the un-

† The learned Joseph Mede excellently observes——" That the sovereign or supreme excellence of God must be adored with the lowest demission of mind, or the greatest *stoop* the soul can make. We find by experience, that the disposition of the eye, that fitteth it to behold the visible sun, makes a man blind, when he looks down upon himself. So here the apprehension of the transcendent excellency of God, ten thousand times brighter than the sun, if truly admitted into our hearts, must needs darken all over-weening conceit of any worthiness in ourselves. The greater we would apprehend his *power*, the more sensible we must be of our own *weakness :* The greater we acknowledge and adore his *goodness*, the less goodness must we see in ourselves. The more we would apprehend his *wisdom*, the less we are to be puffed up, with our own knowledge: as in a pair of scales, the higher we would raise one scale, the lower we pull down the other, so the higher we raise God in our hearts, the lower we must depress ourselves." Works, p. 158.

bounded goodness, the long-suffering patience and forbearance of this beneficent Father, melts the heart into the most sensible love and gratitude, while the particular instances of his parental care and providence, of his inestimable bounties conferred upon the soul, causes it to *apply* all these divine attributes to itself, as exerted and employed for its sake: causes it to rejoice in this heavenly Father, in which new relation through Christ it now sees, adores, and loves the Lord of heaven and earth, and with humble filial confidence, and admiring joy can say, "Whence, O my Lord, whence, O my Father and my God, whence all this love, this unspeakable love to unworthy *me!* thou art *my* God, and I will praise thee, thou art *my* God, and I will exalt thee." The knowledge too of God's all-seeing eye fills the renewed soul with awful apprehensions of its duty: in every place it can say with Jacob, *How dreadful is this place! surely the Lord is here!* And under the constant influence hereof, how holily, soberly, and unblamably doth the man demean himself, how careful is he of even his inmost thoughts, how jealous over his lips, how watchful over all his actions.—But above all, the sight and sense of God's redeeming love in Christ, the knowledge, the experimental* knowledge, that *though he be just, yet is he the justifier of them that*

* I call it an *experimental* knowledge, with Bishop Beveridge, to distinguish it (in his words) from those abstruse and metaphysical speculations, which a man may have concerning God, and yet not be an holy man; and by it I mean such a *knowledge of God*, as none can rightly apprehend, but they that have it, consisting in a due sense of his greatness, goodness and glory, upon one's own heart, whereby we have such enlarged, and, as I may so say, sensible conceptions of him, as to apprehend him infinitely great and good, wise and powerful, yea, so as to apprehend him infinitely beyond our highest apprehensions of him, &c. Sermons, vol. viii. p. 150. I cannot but wish that this volume more especially of the Bishop's sermons was in every one's hands, as it must mend, by God's grace, every heart that reads it.

believe in Jesus;—the unbounded love of Christ, in taking our nature upon him, paying our debt and purchasing our ransom: the no less unbounded love of the ever blessed Spirit convincing, comforting, enlightening and sanctifying the soul: —This amazing and unparalleled love of the three divine persons in the Godhead, opened upon the soul, and felt in the heart, above all distinguishes the *new creature*, and gives him those infallible tokens of his sonship and adoption, which the sinner can never have, and which though the hypocrite may assume to himself, he can never possess; in this respect he may deceive men, but he can neither deceive God, nor his own conscience.

And when the eyes of the natural man are thus opened to a new and right sense of GOD, as a God of *justice* and *love*, redeeming the soul by the blood of Jesus, and sanctifying it by the indwelling of the Spirit, looking up to this divine Godhead with deep *humility:* fervent *love* and *self-application;* Then doth this of necessity, nay, and indeed at the same time induce, 2dly, a new sight and sense of HIMSELF.

He now sees what he was before unwilling to confess, that his nature is wholly and desperately corrupt, that the thoughts and imaginations of his heart are only evil continually; he sees what enmity and hatred against God's pure and holy law hath long lodged there; *he remembers his own evil ways, and his doings that were not good, and loathes himself in his own sight,* because of *his iniquities and abominations.** And though in reality, he is no worse than he was before, when vainly standing upon his own merits, though he was then equally abominable and vile, when he saw it not, and so could not confess it: Now that the Sun of righteousnes hath

* Ezek. xxxvi. 12.

opened his eyes, and shone upon his heart, those pollutions are seen, which he could not discern, when there was no dawning of light in him, when the day of grace and the brightness of the morning-star was not yet arisen upon his soul. Thus in a dark and gloomy den, vipers and poisonous animals brood secure and undiscovered, till the light is poured in upon them, and all the foul horror of the place manifested to the affrightened eye.*—And this strongly marks the difference between the natural and the spiritual man; the natural man when advised of his impurity and total uncleanness as having no eyes to see, cries out, *Am I a dog to do this?*§ So far from acknowledging his sinful vileness, he stands upon his own worth and deservings, and would appear outwardly unto men as free from pollutions. And so the formal professor, who though he may talk of original sin and the corruption of human nature, though he may deplore the guilt and stain of sin, and very pitifully lament the sad miseries of the fall,—is yet a stranger to the corruption of his own heart; while proud of his own formal righteousness, and seeking to *establish* that, he secretly indulges in iniquity, and is religious, for worldly purposes *making long prayers to devour widow's houses*, and not like the truly regenerate, perfectly humbled under the sight and sense of his own unworthiness, and labouring continually to subdue and mortify all those evil passions and affections, which he perceives have so deeply infected his soul; which he now considers as derived from God, as soon to return to him, as wholly dependant on him, and therefore endeavours to live as a being thus immortal, dependant and accountable.

To which new life he is greatly stirred up by the new apprehensions and understanding which he

* Ephes. v. 13. § 2 Kings, viii. 13.

hath, 3dly, of that way of obedience wherein he is bound to walk. He now perceives, that the law is *holy, just, and good.* He acknowledges the wisdom of the gospel-method of salvation, and agrees to this great truth, with all his heart, that *without holiness no man shall*—as no man is fit, without it to—*see God.* For this reason as before he walked on in darkness, and so neither knew nor cared whither he went; so now is he above measure zealous to attend to the light of God's word, as the rule of his life, *as a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his paths*: *sin*, which heretofore appeared pleasing and was grateful in his eyes, now wears the form of the most defiling, rebellious, and abhorred monster, as the worst of evils: dishonourable to God in the highest degree, " the utmost abomination to his purity, the most audacious outrage to his adorable majesty, and perfect contradiction to his deity: he knows, that it exposes man to all the vials of his wrath, and sets the sinner at the extremest distance, opposition, and defiance to him: and therefore he utterly renounces and ahhors *it*," as well as *himself* for having so long harboured in his bosom, as a guest and friend, that which is so odious to the Almighty, so deceitful and pernicious to himself. Above all the recollection of his dear Redeemer's sufferings, occasioned by this deadly evil, increases his abhorrence of it, and quickens him in every path and means of duty, that he may, through God's good Spirit assisting, utterly overturn and destroy its power and dominion in his soul. Nay he now sees, that the first work of God's grace is to cleanse away the defilement and overthrow the dominion of sin in the heart: is to cleanse the polluted fountain; he now knows assuredly, that they *who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts:* he knows that *they who are freed from the condemnation of sin and death, walk not after the*

flesh, but after the Spirit; he knows, that *if Christ be in him, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness*: he knows, that *if he lives after the flesh, he shall die, but that if he through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, he shall live.*

And, as he thus understands from what the law of the Spirit of Christ hath made him free, even from the law of sin and death, so doth he also know, and apply the knowledge to himself, that *love* is the whole, the very *fulfilling* of the law: he knows, that he who saith *he is in the light and hateth his brother is still in darkness, but that he who loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* He knows, that *God is love,* and that he who saith, *he loveth God and hateth his brother is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* He knoweth and is continually labouring to advance and improve himself in this divine principle and commandment, *that he who loveth God, love his brother also.* And thus daily *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,* he *presseth towards the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

Let the careless sinner and the professing hypocrite say if it be so with them; let them declare whether they are led by the Spirit of God to mortify all the deeds of the flesh, to love their brother even as themselves, and thus to approve themselves sons and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ?—Alas, this is a mark wherein no man can deceive himself, and without this all will be but in vain: for *if we do not die with Christ,* we shall never rise with him; and if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus

* See St. John's first epistle, and Philip. iii. 13.

from the dead, *do not dwell in us here,* to begin this good work, he that raised up Jesus from the dead will never quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit to life eternal.

And to what views of this *life eternal,* this *everlasting* HOME, 4thly, are the eyes of the truly regenerate also opened? It now appears as the grand end for which he was born, and its concern and care as *the one thing needful:* eternity, awful eternity breaking upon his view, how doth this world, and all its empty toys and vanities sink in their value and appear as mere shadows and play-things to his soul? When his contemplations are carried out to that awful and tremendous day, on which the elements shall melt away with fervent heat, and the heavens depart as a scroll, on which the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised with that alarming voice "Come to judgment, come away," when the Son of Man shall appear with his sign in the sky, *his garment white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire: a fiery stream issuing and coming forth before him, thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him: whilst the judgment is set and the books are opened:* When he beholds those on the right hand welcomed into heaven, amidst the melody and congratulation of rejoicing saints and angels; when he beholds those on the left hand hurried into flaming, ever-during fire, amidst the scoffs, the curses, stings and upbraidings of devils and condemned spirits,—How doth all he can possess in this world dwindle into nothing, if compared with the loss of that blessed estate—how doth all he can do and suffer in this world seem small and little to be regarded, if he can avoid the horror of the other and escape those flames of eternal misery! —The constant and habitual sense of this, the just,

though daily decreasing dread of hell, the glorious and daily increasing hopes and love of heaven, quicken him in his watchfulness and walking, cause him to look over all earthly things with a pilgrim's passing eye, and to use all his endeavours and unite all his efforts, to secure the blessed hope of everlasting life, by daily growing in humility and in every grace, by purely and entirely seeking the honour of God, by more and more despising himself, and more and more thirsting after full and liberal draughts of divine love. And can *death* be any other to such a one, than the *messenger of peace*, bringing glad tidings of great joy to his soul, that the hour is come, when he shall be glorified with his Father, when he shall be taken from all the evil and suffering of a vain world and sinful flesh, and received to his eternal home, where with all the company of the blessed he shall enjoy for ever an "happy, serene, most amiable, pure and holy life; a life which fears no death, which feels no sorrow, which knows no sin, which languishes under no pain, is distracted with no care, is ruffled with no passion, lies at the mercy of no accidents: an incorruptible unchangeable life, that hath every thing to attract our affections, and command our esteem. There will be no enemies to assault us, no envy to undermine us, no temptations to seduce, no fears to confound us, but perfect love and harmony of souls; a day that never declines, a light that never goes out: there we shall see God face to face, and when we awake up after his likeness we shall be satisfied with it."

Such is the truly regenerate in his future expectations; and very different is he herein also from other men: possible it is, that the most notorious sinner, and the most formal Pharisee, upon a near view and sight of death and judgment, may be aroused into fear, and terrified into awful apprehensions concerning the horrors of hell, but they never can

be *terrified* into any love and desire of heaven. For what would heaven be to the sinner and hypocrite, whose pleasures are in this world, whose hopes and delights are in nothing beyond the grave, whose lusts and selfish affections are the deities they worship, the idols they adore, and who, as having nothing of that *love, which never faileth,* in their hearts can have no part or portion in that heaven, where *love,* immortal love, is the business, the happiness and the glory of the blessed?

Such then are the apprehensions, which the soul, spiritually enlightened, hath of the great things which concern its salvation,—of *God,* of *itself,* of its *duty,* and its *expectations.* How different the walking too of the man, whose eyes are thus opened, is from that of those who continue still in darkness hath fully been declared to you, as we have gone through these marks of the spiritual illumination of the understanding and thoughts: so that it remains only for us to apply to ourselves what have gone before, in order to our perfect satisfaction, whether indeed WE as conscious that we have hitherto been *darkness,* can now say, *that we are light in the Lord,* and that we *walk as* children of the light. To which end these questions will greatly conduce: and I pray you, as ye tender your salvation, seriously to put them to your own consciences in the fear and presence of that all-seeing God, before whom it will avail us little to be found dissemblers, for he *trieth the very hearts and the reins.*—And I could wish you continually to bear in mind, that a right understanding of the things which pertain to *God,* to *man,* his *duty* and *expectations,* are fully and perfectly contrasted and distinguished from whatever the careless and formal Christian may profess, by that *humility, love,* and *self-application,* which always accompanies the true believer's knowledge of these things, wherein he cannot deceive himself, and the want of which

is a sure mark of the soul's continuance in darkness. —Look inward therefore, and see, if you have been or are illuminated in the knowledge of God,—for true grace shining upon the soul, like the light of the sun breaking from the East upon the benighted earth not only discovers itself but brings other objects, before hidden, to view.

First then with regard to *God.* Do you see and adore him, as a God of infinite glory, unsullied purity, and exact justice? Doth the sense of his divine and almighty majesty and power lessen you into a mere nothing, and cause you to esteem yourself but as dust and ashes before him, as less than the least of all his creatures, in whose sight the *whole world is but as a little grain of the balance, yea, as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth?** Doth the sense of his goodness, his patience and forbearing love, which might justly have cut you off in the very blossom of your sins, strike you with deep gratitude, and melt you into love unfeigned? Are you duly sensible of his all-seeing eye continually beholding you? Do you live under the knowledge of his divine presence,

* Wisdom ii. 22. I know not of any passage that can give us a more *sublime idea* of God, and a more humbling sense of ourselves, than this. If the whole world be but as a grain of the balance, as one drop of the *morning dew* before him, what am I, may the soul well say, what *am I*, and how insignificant in the sight of this glorious God? Let pride and worldly contention view themselves in this comparison, and how will all their swelling sink into nothing, how will all their vast ambition be allayed. We cannot see ourselves too *little*, as in ourselves, *too great* as redeemed by and in Christ. Hence Dr. Young, very beautifully, speaking of *man*,

> An heir of glory,—a frail child of dust
> *Helpless*, immortal! *insect* infinite!
> A worm! a God! I tremble at myself,
> And in myself am lost!
>
> *Night Thoughts, at the beginning.*

and think, and talk, and act as one in the sight of an eternal God! O did you but constantly thus maintain a sense of God's presence, how would you advance in holiness, how evident and sure a token would you have, that you were indeed a child of God! But say—hath the love of God in Christ brought peace and comfort to your repenting and afflicted soul? Is Jesus precious above all, the *chiefest among ten thousands*, in your sight? Are you led and taught by his Spirit, living in and by him, with sweet and inexpressible communion, and hanging upon him with full dependance, casting all your care upon him, as knowing that he careth for you?—2dly. As to *yourselves*, say, do ye now see yourselves, as fallen, sinful, wretched creatures, unable of yourselves to help yourselves, liable to God's just wrath and damnation, and certain to perish, unless Jesus stand in the way, and turn his wrathful indignation from you! Are you, upon the sight hereof, more and more humbled in your own eyes? Do you consider your soul, as immortal, dependant, and accountable, and endeavour so to live and act, as one that must live for ever, as one that depends wholly on the riches of divine grace, and as one that must give a strict and solemn account? And having this sense of God and yourselves—say, 3dly, is the *law* of your God honourable in your sight? And are all your endeavours put forth to gain strength in all the means of grace, to perform the law, and to walk in the holy commandments of God blameless? Are you convinced, that the pure and holy law of God is fulfilled in love? And do you love God with all your soul, and your neighbour as yourself, assured that he who loveth not his neighbour whom he hath seen, cannot truly love God whom he hath not seen! Or, if you cannot answer these in their full extent, is it the earnest desire and wish of your soul to be

thus perfect in love? Is it the earnest wish and longing of your heart thus to be taken up and filled with this never-failing charity?—And as a first step hereto, is the dominion of sin destroyed in your hearts, is it hateful and loathsome in your eyes? and though you find the strugglings of the flesh and spirit, the law of sin warring in your members, do you yet labour continually to subdue and destroy all contending passions, and to *keep under*, and *bring your body into subjection*, lest haply, after all your knowledge, *you yourself* should become a *cast-away?* And, 4thly, thus grounded in humility, thus filled with love, thus purely and entirely seeking the honour of God, say is your heart, where your true treasure is also? Is it, as well as your conversation in heaven, from whence you look for the coming of the Lord Jesus with earnest expectation and affectionate joy, praying with sincere fervour, that his *kingdom may come*, as hoping to receive a crown of glory from his hands on that day, as hoping to enter into the joy of your Lord? and upon the happy sense of this your sonship and adoption, say, is death no longer a king of terrors, but a king of comforts, greatly to be desired of your souls?—This is a trying mark: and if you have not yet attained the victory over this fear, are you labouring to do so, through Jesus Christ your triumphant leader, seeking and suing to him in all the means of grace, and endeavouring to obtain his favour, by walking in his love and obedience?—O thou highly favoured of the Lord, happy indeed art thou, who canst with satisfaction answer the demands of thy conscience in these respects! Fear not, only persevere: continue steadfast, forget what is behind, and reach forth unto that which is before. To which end these three things will eminently conduce,—an eye fixed upon the cross of Jesus Christ—an eye fixt upon the God of heaven, as alway seeing and observing every the most hidden

thought, word and action,—and an eye turned constantly to the last and fearful day of judgment, upon which we must all appear. To live under an habitual sight and sense of these three things, as it must destroy sin in us, so must it greatly improve us in that *holiness*, without which no *man shall see the Lord*, and for which those were eminent, who are recorded in scripture, as having *walked* with, and so *pleased* God, &c.

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND.

MATTHEW xii. 13.

Then saith he to the Man, Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other.

OUR Lord, according to his custom, went on the sabbath-day into one of the synagogues where the Scribes and Pharisees were assembled, and ready to lay hold of any pretence, that they might accuse him; and behold, there was a man there present among the poor, who were to be relieved, who had his right hand *withered*, the nerves and sinews being so shrunk up and *dried*, (ξηραμμενην) that, it was perfectly useless; the Scribes and Pharisees, who had observed him profane the sabbath, as they judged, a little before, supposing that he would now do the like and that they should have a fair charge against him, *watched him*, say the evangelists, *whether he would heal on the sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him.* But Jesus, the Searcher of hearts, well knew their thoughts and the malignity of their intentions; he said therefore to the man who had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst: designing thereby to render the miracle evident to all their eyes,

and at the same time to stir up, if possible, their compassion and tender concern, by the sight of this their fellow-creature's unhappy calamity.* The man at his call arose and stood forth; then said Jesus unto them, "*I will ask you one thing*, which will be a sufficient answer to the question, you have just put to me, namely, *whether it be lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?* In answer to which I ask, *Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?* let your own consciences be your judges, whether of the two is lawful, *to do good* to such a poor afflicted son of Abraham, whom Satan hath thus bound; or *to do evil*, as you are desirous of doing by seeking every opportunity to destroy the life of me, an innocent person, who am come to *save life*, while you seek to destroy it!—Besides, he goes on, *I will* convince you again from your own conduct; for which of you is there, that shall have a sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out; how much then is a man better than a sheep! Wherefore I conclude, that it is lawful to do good on the sabbath-day; yea, just as much more valuable as the life of a man is than the life of a sheep, so much more lawful and expedient is it to *do good*, than *to omit any occasion* of so doing (which is to *do evil*:") For the *omission*

* This is St. Chrysostom's remark. St. Jerom says, that in the gospel of the Nazarites, this man was said to be a *mason*, a person, who got his bread by his daily labour, and therefore the greater object of pity—and that he humbly besought Jesus to relieve him. Cæmentarius *eram, manibus victum quæritans, precor te, Jesu, ut mihi restituas sanitatem, ne turpiter mendicem cibos.*—He adds, *usque ad adventum salvatoris arida manus fuit in synagoga Judæorum, & Dei* opera non fiebant *in eâ, postquam ille venit in terras, reddita est in apostolis credentibus, dextra & operi pristino restituta.*"

of a good action, upon a proper opportunity and exigency, is ever esteemed the same as the commission of an evil one. And it is worthy our consideration that in the necessity of our neighbour, there is no medium between *good* or *ill.*

The Pharisees, unable to answer, held their peace; they could not say it was lawful to do evil on the sabbath-day; they would not say it was lawful to do well: and therefore though convinced, they were unwilling to confess what they saw and felt, to lay aside that bitter spirit of malice and opposition wherewith they were filled against our master, and candidly and generously submit to the truth.—He perceiving this, *looked round about upon them with anger; being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;* and to shew us, that a good action is never to be omitted for the obstinate malignity, perverseness and contradiction of any adversaries,* he saith to the man, *Stretch forth thine hand;* which he immediately performing upon his command, in the very attempt, as he *stretched it forth, it was restored whole, like as the other.* This stupendous miracle and undeniable evidence of the divine power of Christ, had no other effect upon the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees, than to fill them with madness against him, and with plots and contrivances how they might destroy him. A sad instance of the hardness of the human heart, and the power of envy, whose baleful influence poisoning the soul, makes men capable of every crime, and hath led

* Quesnelle on Luke observes, this steadfast and undaunted *look* of Christ teaches his ministers not to be at all terrified by the ill-will of the adversaries of goodness and truth; those whom fear renders cowardly in the exercise of their ministry, forget that they exercise it in the name and place of Christ, and that they must give account to him of their unfaithfulness and of the damage, which the church shall have suffered thereby in her children.

the way to the perpetration of every diabolical mischief.*

As the *eye* of the body is used for spiritual sight, the *ear* for *hearing*, the *tongue* for *speaking*, &c. so the *hand* is the symbol of *action*, and as being that whereby we perform *corporal* is referred commonly to *spiritual* acts;† the *right hand* denotes power and strength, and God's *right hand* is generally used in scripture to denote all the effects of his omnipotence. I shall therefore, according to my purposed method, make no other use of this miracle, than to shew from it after a general remark or two, that,

I. As this man's hand was restored by Christ, so the power of *acting* conformably to the will of God must be *restored* to *us*, who have lost it in and through Adam, and are not able of ourselves to do any good work till renewed by the grace of Christ; and,

II. That so doing, *acting thus conformably*, &c. is the surest test of the new creation, of a *renewed heart, and a right spirit*. For as we must have new ears to hear, a new tongue to speak, and new eyes to see, so must we also have *new hands to handle the word of life*, new powers given us by his grace, to work the acceptable work of the Lord: which we can have only by the Spirit of Christ regenerating us, and which we shall have if we sincerely desire it—*for if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

Before I enlarge hereupon, it may be necessary just to remark, 1st, That from what Christ here speaks of the sabbath, it is sufficiently proved

* For instances, see St. Clement's epistle to the Corinthians—as translated by Abp. Wake, p. 4, &c.

† See page 44 foregoing and note.

against the superstitious notions of the Jews, that works of beneficence, which are used either towards man or beast on the sabbath, supposing the great business of the day and the worship of almighty God be not thereby interrupted, are by no means profanations of the sabbath.* And it is worthy observation, that the Jews afterwards abolished that custom of their fathers, to which our Saviour refers, of drawing an ox, or a sheep out of a pit, and which was in use, when he was present upon earth; and now hold, that it is absolutely unlawful so to do, nay, even to save a *man*'s life, by drawing him out from a pit, or any other place into which he may have fallen: a remarkable instance of which we have in the Jew at Munster. Thus impiety and iniquity always grow worse and worse.—The *Son of man* is the Lord of the sabbath, he who first instituted it, in the state of man's innocency, he who renewed that institution at Mount Sinai, and who of consequence has an original right in himself, to make what circumstantial alterations he pleases concerning it; and as, agreeably to the design and nature of the gospel dispensation, he has only changed it from the seventh to the first day of the week, and allowed only the performance of works of mercy and necessity, and such as relate to the religious observance of the day, all other obligations of a sabbath remain in force: Wherefore it is highly incumbent upon us to take heed that we make it a day of holy *rest*, and an emblem of that glorious *rest*, into which we hope to enter, and of which the sabbath is a figure and a pledge; it is highly incumbent upon us to take heed that we be found in no other works than those of religion, mercy and necessity, from which

* See Dr. Whitby's annotation on the place, and Bishop Andrews on the Commandments.

no *day* will exempt us, and from which we should never *cease*. Happy will it be for us if, like our Lord, we be found employed in these, *attending the synagogue*, the places of divine worship, and *restoring the withered hand*, giving hands to the maimed, *eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame;* miserable indeed will it be, if by a contrary extreme we abuse the holy sabbaths of our God, not by scrupulous, pharisaical, and hypocritical superstition, but by open and bold neglect, by wicked and blasphemous profanations of them; our wisdom it is to guard against either extreme: and we can be secured from either, no way better than by making the service of God, and the good of our neighbour, our pleasing employment on this day of holy *rest*. *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!*

II. When the envious Pharisees, though convinced, would not confess and amend; our Lord, we are told by St. Mark, *looked round about on them who were in the synagogue with anger, being grieved for the hardness,* πωρωσει *of their hearts*. In which there is something peculiarly beautiful: even his *anger* was *compassionate;* he was *angry* and yet *grieved:* angry at the *sin*, grieved for the sinner: even when we through our fatal obstinacy and *callousness* of heart, give him the justest cause for anger, yet at the same time is he afflicted for us; more pitiful and compassionate towards us, more anxious and earnest for our welfare and recovery, than the shepherd for his lost and wandering sheep, than the father for his prodigal and abandoned son. Our hardness of heart very justly raiseth his anger: our condemnation and destruction consequent upon this perverseness, raise in his *heart* the tenderest concern: how much should this incite us not to wound afresh his loving heart, that hath bled so freely and liberally for all our sins—how much

should this incite us not to abuse his compassion and mercy, lest he be at length angry indeed, and turn away his face in wrathful indignation from us —how much should it prevent despair, and incline us to hasten to his feet, when we know that we have given him righteous cause for anger, to our comfort recollecting, that though he be *angry*, yet is he also *grieved*, and willing to receive the humbled, penitent prodigal.——His example also in this respect shews us, how our zeal in his cause should be moderated; teaching us to be angry at, and express our resentment solely against the sin, while we grieve for the sinner, and are truly sorry for that hardness of heart, and obstinacy of soul, which must involve those in destruction, who resist all the motions of grace and the offers of Christ, and who like the Pharisees, when fully convinced, will yet contradict the evidence of their senses, will yet *deny* the Lord that bought them, and through base and malevolent principles oppose the Gospel of light and love.*—And therefore worthy all our practice is this resolution of the pious Bishop Beveridge: "I am resolved by the grace of God, so to be angry as not to sin, and therefore to be angry at no-

* It is much to be feared that this is greatly the case with many of our *present*, it is more to be feared, that it hath been greatly the case, with many of our former *deistical* gentlemen, who, unhappily for themselves and others, have taken it into their heads to dislike and oppose the *Christian system*, and its pure and holy precepts. It might be easy to assign good reasons for such a dislike and opposition: though our Saviour seems to comprehend them all in a few words, John iii. 19, 20. If a man be sincere and really desirous of knowing the truth, let him not set down with a full resolution to oppose, but only ask wisdom of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and follow our Saviour's advice in the words of St. John vii. 17, and I dare pronounce he will not long continue an unbeliever. Socrates, Plato, and Tully, of whom these gentlemen talk so much, shew abundantly by their writings, that had they been so happy as to have lived in the days of Gospel Light, they would never have been *deists*.

thing but sin." And Oh what a sedate and contented spirit, says he, will this resolution breed in me! How easy and quiet shall I be under all circumstances; whilst others are peevish and fretful, and torment themselves with every petty trifle, that doth but cross their inclinations, or seem to be injurious to them, or fall into the other extreme of a stoical insensibility, I shall by this resolution maintain a medium betwixt both, and possess my soul in peace and patience.*—

St. Ambrose thus spiritualizes the miracle before us: "by this *hand*, saith he, is signified Adam, and his whole posterity: whose *right hand*, which he reached forth to take and eat of the forbidden fruit, was truly *dried up and withered* to all good works: while the left retains its strength, too ready and active, in the performance of evil. Let therefore *man*, with the withered hand, come forth into the midst of the assembly and into the presence of Jesus, that the hand may be restored by his word and Spirit, and no longer continue useless, but be employed in the works of God."†

Be this application of the holy father's as it may, the great point advanced in it is too evidently true: our right hand is indeed withered and dry to good, while our left is active to do evil. We are all by nature prone to sin and averse to holiness: till the right hand is restored, till the nature is renewed by

* Beveridge's Private Thoughts, p. 214, vol. i.

† Quesnelle on Mark, observes, that a *withered hand* in the sight of God and in the eyes of faith is a covetous wretch, who bestows on the poor little or no alms at all: it is a lukewarm and negligent christian, who performs no good works; it is a magistrate or person in authority, who takes no care to maintain order and justice: and it is a great man who abandons the innocent when oppressed: none but thou O Lord, canst heal this withered hand, because its indisposition proceeds from the heart and thou alone canst apply thy healing and almighty hand to that.

Christ, there is *none that doth good, no not one:* but if we are indeed truly renewed, then sin hath no longer dominion over us; our members are no longer yielded as *instruments of unrighteousness unto* sin, but as *instruments of righteousness unto God.* This is the main and decisive test of our regeneration: it is as it were the consummation of the whole. For though we may suppose, that our *ear* is redeemed from its vain delight in unprofitable *hearing*, our tongue loosed from its dumbness to the praise of God, and our *eyes* opened to a new sight and sense of HIM, *ourselves* and our duty; yet unless our hand is also restored, unless our *actions* manifest the sincerity of our thoughts and words, we want the due test, and shall grievously delude ourselves. As therefore I have before given you certain marks, whereby you may know whether your *words* and *thoughts* have been renewed by the grace of Christ: so now I propose to shew you in general what are the actions of the *new man*, and what he will most certainly do, whose withered hand hath really been restored by Christ;—the truth is, though we necessarily speak of these as separate, yet if sincere, they always go together. New thoughts and ideas produce new words and actions, the *understanding* being rightly informed, the *will* and *affections* follow its dictates; these must not be separated, when we consider the *new creature* in a compound view: a remark which deserves our attention, since some have fatally deceived themselves by imagining, that a change of *head notions* and a change of conversation from *worldly* to religious subjects—shall I say from *worldly* to *religious* scandal?—that such a change is regeneration! when at the same time they have not experienced a change of *heart* and *life*, without which all pretensions to faith and grace are vain; seeing it is hereby that we *know* that we *know God*, as St. John

emphatically expresses himself, *if we walk in the light, as he is in the light*, or in other words, *if we keep his commandments.* And as *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, from hence have we the first mark of a *real Christian*, as to external duties—which is a *putting away the works of darkness*, an abstaining from all known sin, from every thing contrary to the law of God, *a ceasing to do evil.* This is the very first step in the Christian life; whoever remains under the power and practice of any known sin, cannot be a *new creature;* whoever then lives in the wilful habit of any of these works of the flesh, *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such like*: let him be told, that he hath no fellowship with God, in whom is no darkness at all, and that while he doth such works of darkness, he is a child of the prince of darkness, and if continuing in them, must be left to perish in the utter blackness and darkness of such abominable defilements. Let therefore no one in this respect deceive his own soul—if, O man, thy conscience smites thee, if thou art guilty of any of these, if thou livest under the *dominion* of any *known* sin, whatever are thy principles, whatever is thy persuasion, whatever thy hopes, they are vain, false and destructive, and as sure as God is truth and light, so sure thy soul thus in darkness and falsehood, shall never have communion with and knowledge of God; for the children of God are known by their resemblance to their Father, and if they do not strive to obtain that resemblance here, by *purifying themselves as he is pure*, they can have no hope of *seeing him as he is*, and being made like unto him in glory.*

* See 1 John, iii. 2, 3.

This is the first sure mark in the life of the renewed Christian, even a delivery from the *power, dominion* and *servitude* of sin; I say from the *power, &c.*—for *sin* will still remain in our mortal bodies, its *strugglings* and *temptations* will still demand even unto death our constant care and watchfulness; nay our grand business, when really renewed in heart and life, is continually to mortify more and more all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily to proceed in all virtue and godliness of living: And the very best and most exemplary Christians that ever breathed, have always found abundant cause to lament the weakness and imperfection of the flesh, the *Canaanites still in the land*—so far from arrogantly boasting of *sinless perfection.*

But it is not enough to *cease* from *evil,* we must also *learn to do good:* we must not only put off the *old man,* but put on the *new:* so that the second mark of a hand truly restored is an *exact obedience to the will of God.* Herein is the great difference between the carnal and regenerate man: the carnal man acts in conformity to his own will: his interests, pleasures and passions are his rule of action: and though his connexions and credit in the world may oblige him to outward acts of honesty, nay, and sometimes of charity, yet his motive is always one and the same, and always wrong, as being centered in himself and wholly directed to that end. Just the contrary hereto is the truly renewed Christian; the *will of God* is his *rule,* the *glory* of God is his end. He now no longer asks whether such an action be pleasing to the flesh, and profitable for worldly ends, but whether it be pleasing to God, and profitable to his soul: he hath learned that to act in obedience to God's will is the highest pleasure, that to aim continually at God's glory is the highest profit.—He hath learned that whatever is done upon this foundation, is attended with a sure

blessing, and he knows that to obey God is better than all all burnt-sacrifices, than thousands of gold and silver. Hence he resolves never to set his hand, his head or heart about any thing, but what he believes to be really good in itself, and will be so esteemed of God the great judge and rewarder of actions. Thus he acts in exact conformity to the will of God as his rule, and to the glory of God as his end, and this no less in all his duties to God, than in all to his neighbour.

In his duties to God, he is regular, exemplary and exact; in private and public constantly attending upon him, never omitting the service of the church, the closet, or the family, if he be at the head of one. The church and ordinances of his Lord and master are his soul's delight; he goes with cheerful feet to do his will, and is not kept from thence by little frivolous and trifling pretences; in all the acts of public devotion he maintains a due sense of the awfulness of the house of the Lord, and the presence of that glorious Being, who is there in the midst; whether in prayer or praise, whether in hearing the word read or preached, or in whatever acts of devotion he may be engaged, his heart is elevated to God, and his soul desirous to shake off its sluggish earthliness, and to ascend into the *mount of God.** More particularly he above all things rejoices to partake of the blessed sacrament of his Lord's most precious body and blood, and thanks the bountiful giver of all good gifts for the great, unspeakable, and endless comfort therein vouchsafed to souls.—But it would be too long to go through the description of those graces, which shew themselves in the regenerate man's devotions; sufficient let it be to add, that in all he is *sincere*, and in all he is *humble*; whatever

* Exod. xxiv. 13.

prayers he presents, he presents with a contrite spirit, and as conscious of his own manifold unworthiness, is ever craving the mercy of his beloved master, declaring his own unprofitableness, and proclaiming his absolute and full reliance upon his infinite merits, his manifold and great mercies.

Thus, sincere, humble, and exemplary, thus trusting in, and relying upon his God, thus fixing his eye of faith continually on him, walking before him, and living, as it were, in his presence,—he labours, faithfully to discharge his duty to his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the *Lord his God*, imploring his aid, enjoying his favour and rejoicing in his love. But he knows, that he is a *social* being, and remembers that the greatest proof of his love to God, is his love to man for Christ's sake; wherefore he is no less diligent to perform the duties of his station, and thus to present the most acceptable service unto God: he acts in continued conformity to the Golden Rule, *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them;* punctual in his dealings, industrious in his calling, carefully improving every talent, wherewith God hath intrusted him, diligently husbanding every moment of precious time, and above all things avoiding *sloth* and *idleness*, as knowing, *that* the season for temptation, as considering that the time is short and the work great, which he hath to do; and that all his industry and all his labour is a debt which he owes to his family, to his neighbour, and the poor more especially, whose wants he may thus best be enabled to relieve. And as he is thus active in his station, living in an easy acquiescence and submission to the wise disposals of Providence, so doth he labour to fill up all the offices and relations of life with no less sincerity and singleness of heart, with an eye to God and in conformity to his will. If he be a *father*, his chief care is to bring

up his children in the fear and knowledge of their Father in heaven, to make them the children of God, and to provide not only for their present, but their future and eternal inheritance. If a *son*, he remembers that he hath a Father in heaven, and is obedient not for fear, but for conscience sake. If a *husband*, he considers the love of Christ to his church, and makes that love the pattern of his own; if a *servant*, he looks up with a watchful eye to his Master in heaven, and is obedient as to the Lord and not to men; if a *magistrate*, he bears not the *sword* in vain, but with resolution and impartiality executes his commission to the punishment of evil doers, and to the praise of them that do well. And in short in whatever sate or relation of life he stands, to discharge the duties of that station is his singular care and study; for if we are members of Christ, we are members also one of another; and if the members discharge not their proper functions, confusion must ensue and every evil work."*

Such are the actions of the renewed Christian: these are the great and principal outlines of that finished character, to describe which in all its several particulars, would far exceed my present time and compass:† thus he lives and thus he acts, *whose*

* See 1 Cor. xii. 12, &c. and the close of the epistles to the Ephesians, Collossians, &c. and for a fine and useful book of morality, see *Solomon's Ethics, &c.* as drawn into method by Bishop Hall, p. 181. vol. i.

† I have great pleasure in recommending to my reader's perusal a volume of Sermons, published since the first preaching these discourses at *West-Ham*, by the Reverend Mr. *Walker* at *Truro*, where the character of the new creature is largely described, opposed to that of a careless sinner, and contradistinguished from that of a formalist: and in which he hath perfected at large, what my design led me only just to sketch out.—I know not of any modern discourses more proper for the use of the Family, or more likely to answer the excellent author's pious intentions in publishing them; he has gained the happy art to speak the truth plainly, boldly, fully, without any mixture of *Enthusiasm*

hand is restored by Christ, who is redeemed from the power of sin and Satan, who now abhors sin worse than death, who lives in uniform obedience to the *will* of God as his *rule*, and the *glory* of God as the *end* of his actions; who is no partial observer of the law, but equally desirous to approve himself to God and to man, discharging faithfully his duty to both, loving the one with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, and the other, even as himself; and if so loving, of consequence filling up every office of love, not only with zeal and affection, but also with prudence and discretion.

Here then every one hath sure ground to stand upon, sure and infallible tests, whereby to prove and examine his own soul; whether he be in truth a child of God, renewed through grace, and restored to a power of keeping the holy commandments of God. The hypocrite, the insincere and formal professor hath no part or portion in this matter; but spite of all his fair shows and pretences to Godliness, here is terribly reproved, by this touch of ITHURIEL's *spear*,† the child of darkness appears in his proper clothing. *Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous, he that committeth sin, is of the devil.* To whatever religion therefore we pretend, however we may bear the name of Christians, however we may boast of our commu-

or false *Doctrine*: And to his honest labours, I doubt not every sincere Christian will wish good success in the Lord.

† This is an allusion to that passage in the *Paradise Lost*, where Satan is discovered, when at the ear of Eve in the shape of a Toad.

> Him thus intent, *Ithuriel* with his spear
> Touch'd lightly; for no falsehood can endure
> Touch of celestial temper, but returns
> Of force to its own likeness: up he starts
> Discovered and surpris'd! &c. Book IV. 810.

nion and fellowship with Christ and his church, with whatever zeal we may declaim for the cause of God, or however fair an outside we may put on: sure it is, that unless we *do righteousness, as he is righteous*, unless we keep his commandments and walk as he hath set us the example, we are liars, we falsify our profession, the truth is not in us, we are of our father the devil. Prove therefore, my brethren; here again search, try and examine yourselves; let no man deceive you, but in return take good heed, that you do not miserably deceive yourselves. I have given you, in the former sermons, a picture of the new creature, as to his thoughts, apprehensions and words, and proposed some heads of examination, whereby you might try, whether you be indeed in Christ new creatures; a necessary point to be known, seeing without being so, as Christ himself declares, you can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. I have now concluded with a brief and general account of the *actions* of the new creature, which are the consummation of the whole, and I trust, nay am assured, there are many of you, who can apply this description to yourselves; would to God it were the case with every one here present! then what a happy people should we be, even Christ's own peculiar people, those whom he loves, protects, preserves and favours, those for whom he condescended to die, those for whom he lives, he lives to intercede in heaven, he lives to crown with everlasting glory.—Blessed be his name we are born in a country and an age, where we have the full enjoyment of that light of life, which hath shone forth unto all, *teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour*

*Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.** This was the great purpose of his *appearing* in *humility*, and herein we should diligently examine ourselves; for Oh, consider what will all this world, its pleasures, profits or vanities avail you, at that *appearance* in *glory* of the great God and our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, who will render to every man according to their works; and accept none, who have not laboured to become his *peculiar people*, by living, through the *faith* that is in him, godly, righteously and soberly, by purifying themselves, through his grace, from all iniquity, by being ZEALOUS of *Good Works?*

Have you then—ask your own hearts as in the sight and fear of God—have you then laboured so to purify yourselves? Are you redeemed from all iniquity—have you denied ungodliness, and worldly lusts! Or in other words, hath sin no longer dominion over you! do you not live under the power and in the practice of any known sin! This, you remember, is but the first step in the Christian life; but it will be happy if you can answer it with satisfaction to your own souls.—And if thus freed from the servitude of sin, say are you now become the servants of God, doing his will from the heart? Is the law of God your rule and guide, his will your will and rule of action, his glory the great end and purpose of your living; do you serve him with truth, humility and sincerity, and omit no act of religious duty, which you have it in your power to perform? Do you labour to glorify God by a faithful diligence in your calling, as well as by whatever endowments and abilities he hath been pleased to give you? and especially, do you labour to do so, in every relation which you bear to others, fulfilling

* Titus ii. 11, &c.

them as unto God, not unto men? and in all these respects, do you let prudence and discretion, as well as zeal and affection, guide, moderate, and rule you?

If you thus walk in the light, as God is in the light, you have *fellowship with him, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth you from all sin:* Then happy are ye, the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: you are an honour to your religion, an ornament, an unspeakable advantage to society, the bulwarks of the state, and a blessing to all amongst whom you sojourn. O that the number of such was daily increased; O that you would all labour to be of that number, which nothing *hinders* but the perverseness of your own hearts, vainly pursuing shadows and idly doting upon unsubstantial vanities; which every thing persuades you to become, time, eternity, families, country, friends—O that you would listen to their persuasive calls, and resolve to become true disciples of Christ—O that you would consider the blessedness, which such a resolution would afford, and the horrible confusion of face, which a neglect of putting such a resolution into act will cause on that terrible day of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour who gave himself for us, who purchased us with the price of his own most precious blood, and who having thus redeemed and bought us, expects that we in return should give him ourselves, should yield up his own property to him, should yield it up into his loving care here, and he will provide for it an eternal home hereafter. Which, &c.

DISCOURSE XV.

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE.

PART I.

JOHN ii. 1, 2.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage.

IT deserves remarking, that the *first miracle* which Jesus wrought was at a marriage; thus adorning, beautifying and blessing that holy and honourable estate *instituted of God in the time of man's innocency*;* as well as pointing out to us the excellent *mystery*, whereto he hath consecrated it, even to represent and signify that spiritual marriage and unity, which is betwixt Christ and his Church, betwixt the Son of God and human nature; which divine and ever blessed union is the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our comforts.—

* See the beginning of the *matrimonial* service according to our Church.

And I know not when we can more properly dwell upon the subject of this great miracle wherein *Christ manifested forth his glory*, than at the present season of the year,‖ when we are about to commemorate the mystery of our Lord's birth and incarnation, those heavenly nuptials to which a shining choir of the angelic hosts sung that delightful bridal song, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men.* And to shew her sense of this matter, our church hath appointed, amongst the proper psalms for Christmas-Day, one of the most beautiful epithalamiums, the sweetest and divinest marriage hymn that perhaps the whole scripture affords; I mean the xlvth Psalm.

Though Christ was long bethrothed to his spouse the *flesh*, even from the day of the *fall:* though the consummation of his nuptials, his appearance in the flesh was earnestly expected and desired by patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings, and all his faithful servants, the friends of the bridegroom; yet he long delayed his much expected advent, and sent not the *glad tidings* of his approach to the favoured virgin, till things were reduced almost to the last extremity: his peculiar people well nigh deprived of all their power and privileges, nay, and indeed their faith, and with the Gentile world overwhelmed with thick darkness, yea, covered with the shadow of death. In this gloomy night the Sun of Righteousness arose from the east, dispelling the shades, and enlightening the world: He delights to save and assist when matters are come to the last crisis, and human powers are unavailing; when the ship is sinking, he speaks the word: Men must be heavy-laden before they can come to him: and he ofttimes in love reduces them to straits and necessities for this blessed purpose. While there was

‖ Sunday before *Christmas-Day.*

plenty of wine at this marriage in Cana, even his mother sought not to him; for where there is no need of him perceived, his help will never be called in: but soon as the wine was out, soon as they began to want, then they bethink themselves what a guest was present, and his mother proposes their deficiencies to him. This is the way of human nature; and these examples of our Lord's readiness to save, are a singular blessing to us, apt as we are, while we want not his aid, to forget that GOD, who yet in our wants, if we cry to him, will never forget us.—But I will not anticipate any useful remarks which may arise from this first display of our Lord's glory, intending,

I. To explain the literal history, and to obviate some difficulties, which men *willing* and *wishing* to be *infidels* have raised against it, which done, I will,

II. Remark what practical improvements may be made hereof: and,

III. In general direct you to the spiritual use and application of this miracle. And may the Divine Author of it bless our present reflections upon it in the same manner to our souls as he did the performance of it to his disciples; for then *he manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.*

I. *And the third day,* says the evangelist, *there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee;* the third day, as it is supposed after Christ's coming into Galilee, of which despised country Cana was an obscure town, in the tribe of Asher, whereof it was foretold, by the patriarch Jacob, that he *should yield royal dainties.*

Thus, as well as in his birth, his parents, and his disciples, Jesus chose the weak, the humble, and the despised things of the earth to confound the great and the wise, *to manifest forth his glory.*

In this same village there was a *marriage-feast*,* for so the original word imports; and we know that the Jewish solemnities of this kind continued for many days. *And the mother of Jesus was there*, she was there as a person concerned, not called or invited; from whence it is presumed, and tradition confirms it,‖ that this was the marriage of some near relation: It has been said that St. John, the beloved disciple, was one of the parties: but it seems more generally supposed, that the persons were Alpheus or Cleopas, and that Mary, who in the scriptures is called *the sister of Jesus his mother.* Jesus, however, *and his disciples*, those few, who already *followed him, were invited* to the marriage; and as he was now entered upon his ministry, and acted in a public capacity, wherever he went, or whatever action he did, it was with one and the same view, namely, to perform his Father's will;

* See Judges xiv. 12. and Genesis xxix. 27, 28. Γαμος. *Vocant autem* γαμον *Græci interpretes, ait Chemnitius,* Genesis xxix. 22. Esther ii. 18, *convivium nuptiale, quando sponsa ad sponsum introducitur & sponsus ad sponsam ingreditur, sicut scriptura solet congressum conjugalem honeste circumloqui. Alterum enim vocabulum, quod Hebræis significat desponsationem, seu ipsum conjugium Græci reddiderunt,* Joshua xxiii. 12. επιγαμιαν Cant. iii. 11. νυμφευσιν. *Hoc observandum est ideo, quod Christus, non jam privatus vivens sed in ipso officio Messiæ, non tantum desponsationi, sed & illi convivio interesse voluit, quando sponsus ad sponsam ingreditur: & hinc* Heb. xiii. 4. *dicitur, ipsum cubile in conjugio esse immaculatum.*

‖ And this may be considered as the more probable, says Doddridge, as Mary was not only present at the feast, but was concerned about supplying them with wine; and when the feast was over, we are told at verse 12, that Jesus was attended at his leaving Cana not only with his own disciples, but with his brethren, or his nearest kinsmen, who probably came thither as relations to be present at the marriage. As Mary here is spoken of alone, it may be reasonable to conclude, that Joseph was now dead, and that he lived not to the time, when Jesus entered on his public ministry, especially as he is no where mentioned in the gospel afterwards. See Dr. Lightfoot's *Harmony in Loc.*

for he had meat to eat, that no man knew of; his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. Wherefore, knowing that his attendance at the marriage would be for the glory of God, *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, to the intent that his* disciples might believe; he complied with the request of his friends, and graced the marriage-feast with his holy presence: Not to countenance light intemperance, much less the inordinate excesses frequent on such occasions, but by manifesting forth his glory, to direct their view to a better, even an eternal marriage; a holy and inseparable union, of which divine love is the sure and indisputable cement.—And it was not long before their necessities required his gracious aid; his mother—provident for the young couple, and having conceived great expectations (as she had good grounds) of her wonderful Son, whose miraculous conception she could never forget, and who, we are told, kept all the remarkable circumstances attending his birth, &c. and pondered them in her heart, and whose entrance on his public ministry she now perceived with joy, witnessed as it was by the voice from heaven:* when the wine began to fail, and was almost out, υστερησαντος, but a small stock possibly having been at first provided, by reason of the meanness of the persons; and that failing the sooner, as greater numbers of guests attended than was expec-

* These remarks are made by Theophylact. Παρακαλει δε αυτον η μητηρ, &c. His mother exhorts him to work a miracle, as she had conceived a great opinion of his power, as well from his conception as his birth. For she kept all these things in her heart, and concluded from them that, her Son could do something above the power of man. For she was not induced to ask this of him from any former miracle she had seen him work; for when a child he did not work any miracles, which if he had done, it would have been well known by all; but she had heard the testimony of John, and saw his disciples now following him; and from all these she conjectured the power of her Son.

ted, probably on account of Jesus whose fame began now to be spread abroad:—In this situation of things the mother of Jesus saith unto him, *they have no wine,* hinting, as our Saviour's answer shews, her desire, that he would afford some miraculous supply.* Wherefore to teach her, that in the exertion of his divine power she must by no means take upon her to direct, or assume any authority over him—who though her Son in the human was yet her God and her Lord in the divine nature, David's Lord as well as David's son,‖—he saith unto her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.* In which there is nothing, as some have impiously supposed, either of disrespect or moroseness: to suppose either in the blessed Son of God is blasphemy. The term *woman* appears a little harsh to us, only from *our* manner of using it; but the very best and most polite heathen writers use it as an honourable title, and when the highest mark of respect is intended;† nay indeed, our Lord himself used it to his mother at a time and upon an occasion, when his bowels sounded with the tenderest affection towards her, even when he hung bleeding on the cross for her as well as for all the world, nailed by that almighty love, which caused him not to abhor this virgin mother's womb—*Woman,*—said he to her in that bitter hour, commending her to the disciple whom he loved,—*woman, behold thy son.* Then indeed the hour was come when *he had to do with her*—when that nature, which he took from her, was for her and all the world, enduring the most bitter

* Some have supposed that Mary spoke this to her Son, as a reason why they should depart; but it appears to me quite foreign to the subject, as well as to the answer which Jesus gave.

‖ Jesus is at once the *root* and the *offspring* of David. See Rev. xxii. 16.

† See Blackwall's *Sacred Classics,* vol. i. p. 206.

passion, when indeed she had a part with, yea dominion over him; and when it was that all mankind had to do with him, were connected and concerned with him in the highest degree; when he might well say, *Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, behold and see if ever sorrow was like unto my sorrow—my sorrow* which is all for you, O ye sons of men, which is something to you all, wherein you have all to do with me, wherein all your nearest and dearest interests are inseparably, eternally united.

Then his *hour was come*, and then *he had to do with his mother*; but now, when he acted as God, she was by no means to prescribe to him in any of his mighty works; and therefore upon her attempting to do so, he says, *What have I to do with thee*, τι εμοι και σοι, which is an Hebrew phrase, and in whatever part of scripture it occurs, is apparently used in the sense of our translation, *what have I to do with thee*, what right, rule of authority dost thou claim over me? what concern hast thou with me and my mighty works?* Though she might claim an authority over him as a Son, yet in his public capacity, as the Messiah, the Son of God, she had no right over him; there all relationship in the flesh ceases; as he abundantly declared, when they said unto him, *Behold thy mother and thy brethren without, seek for thee: and he answered them, saying, who is my mother and my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.*§——In this reply then to his mother, he fully declares his divine power, and to our comfort assures us, that we may all

* For a proof hereof, consult the critics—and these texts of St. Matthew viii. 29. Judges xi. 12. 2 Sam xvi. 10. 1 Kings, xvii. 18. 2 Kings, iii. 13. ix. 19. *Septuag.*

§ See Matt. xii. 48. comp. Luke xi. 27.

have to do with him by a relationship in the spirit, since in the hour of his passion we all had to do with him, we all were concerned and interested in him. We have in the viith chapter of St. John ver. 3, an account of a conversation between Jesus and his brethren in Galilee, which seems to me greatly to confirm the explication above given of the present passage. *His brethren said unto him, depart hence, and go into Judæa that thy disciples also may see the works that thou dost: for there is no man, that doth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly; if thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. To which Jesus replied, My time is not yet come, but yours is always ready.* And that by *his time* and *his hour*, he meant the hour of his passion, is manifest from various places of sacred scripture. *No man laid hands on him*, we read, *for his hour was not yet come,—Then they sought to take him, but no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come.—My time is not yet full come.*

Thus Jesus declared to his mother, that in matters pertaining to the divine nature she must not take upon her to direct or think to influence him: there she was also a woman, only a human creature, that wanted his atonement as well as the rest, then she would have to do with him as a son, when his hour of suffering was come, and he was manifesting by his bitter death the reality of his relationship to her, the reality of that human nature, which he took from her.

The generality of writers upon this subject have observed, that this rebuke was intended by our Lord in his prophetic Spirit, as a standing testimony against that idolatry which he foresaw after ages would superstitiously bestow upon his mother, even to the robbing him of the right and honour of his alone mediatorship and intercession: " Oh blessed

virgin, if in that heavenly glory, where thou art, thou canst take notice of these earthly things, with what indignation dost thou look upon the presumptuous superstition of vain men, whose suits make thee more than a solicitor of divine favours? Thy humanity is not lost in thy motherhood, nor in thy glory: the respects of nature reach not so high as heaven: It is far from thee to abide that honour which is stolen from thy Redeemer.*

Be this observation as it will, it is very plain that Mary did not understand this answer as a denial, but, as I conceive, rather an encouragement to her request, as being better informed hereby of her Son's divine power: for she saith to the servants, *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*,—hereby fully declaring her expectations of some mighty work to be done by him, as an answer to what she had suggested to him; and prescribing a rule to the servants, which it would be happy if every servant of Christ would invariably observe, *Whotsoever he saith unto you, do it*, not entering into the reasonableness of the command, or the improbability of the means to the end proposed, but implicitly obeying whatever is a plain and clear command of Chirst, DO *this*; and how any, who call themselves Christians, can dare to disobey any such plain commands, is wonderful and fearful to think, and what it would be almost impossible to believe, if it were not more impossible to disbelieve it. The way of duty is the way of mercy, and blessed are

* Bishop Hall. Bede in answer to Erasmus hath the confidence to assert, that Christ even now at the right hand of his Father, owes obedience to his mother, according to the human nature! And the Roman Catholics in their prayers, entreat the virgin to command her son to perform their petitions! Thus is she more than a solicitor indeed! The reader desirous to see an excellent sermon on the true honour due to the ever blessed virgin, will be very well entertained by consulting Bishop Bull's sermons, vol. i. p. 135.

they who walk even on, without going to the right hand or to the left, either by a bold, a proud, and a selfish presumption of duty, where no command is given; or by a bolder omission of duty, where a plain command is written in the eternal word of God.

The servants at this feast afford us a better example: the Jews were very much in outward and ceremonial washings; superstitious to a strange degree: for which purpose, even at this humble dwelling, there were *set six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece*: a considerable quantity, though at present not very easy to be ascertained with any degree of exactness.* As it was known to all the guests, that these water-pots never contained any thing but water, Jesus therefore chose to make use of them, for the more undeniable proof of the miracle,‖ which was about to be wrought: and accordingly he orders the *servants to fill these water-pots with water.* The reason of which though they could not understand, yet following Mary's admonition, they obeyed, and *filled them up to the brim.* Jesus, having no doubt of the extent and efficacy of his divine power, orders the servants forthwith *to draw out* from the pots even now filled with water, and to *bear to the governor of the feast,* a person usually appointed amongst the Jews to superintend, direct and manage such solem-

* See Dr. Lightfoot's Harmony in Loc. and Godwyn's Moses and Aaron, lib. vi. c. 9. ad finem.

‖ All these tend to the certainty of the miracle. Changing the wine in pots into which nothing but water ever entered. 2. Filling them afresh. 3. Drawing out instantly. 4. Bearing to the governor what the servants thought water. 5. The ignorance of the governor concerning filling the pots and drawing out thence. 6. The natural surprise which we must suppose in the servants on hearing what the governor said. 7. The governor and not the guests tasting and applauding this wine, &c.

nities.* He, not being ignorant of the deficiency of wine at the feast, according to his place, tasted this which the servants bore to him, to see if it were proper for the guests; but upon tasting it he was surprised, so exquisite was the flavour, so uncommon the delicacy of its relish; and not *knowing whence it was, (though the servants which drew the water knew) he called the bridegroom,* and admiring the uncommon excellence of his wine, said, *It is usual* with most men to set forth at the beginning *the good wine,* τον καλον οινον and *when men have drank plentifully, then that which is worse;* thou hast proceeded in a different manner, *thou hast kept the good wine until now.* In which words every discerning reader will see that there is no room at all for those many blasphemous remarks, nay, and daily insults, upon the pure and spotless character of the holy Jesus, the only begotten of the Most High, as if he were indeed a wine-bibber, a friend and encourager of revelry, drunkenness and debauchery.

For in the first place the governor of the feast doth not say even so much as that the present guests had drank plentifully; he only urges the common proceedings in such festivals as these, and the words rather countenance a contrary opinion; for he saith, "every man sets forth good wine at the beginning, and when it *may happen,* that men *shall have drank plentifully*‡ *then that which is worse; thou* (without any connecting particle) *thou hast kept the good wine until now;* thou hast not done as others do; the best wine comes last." Herein is the whole of the comparison; he, by no means

* To this governor of the feast it belonged to bless what was prepared, and having drank of the cup thus blessed, to send it about to the whole company, whence Christ saith to the servants, *Draw out and bear to the governor of the feast.* Whitby.

‡ This is the import of οταν μεθωσι cum *affatim biberint.* Beza.

saith that *they* had drunk plentifully or to excess; it is more than probable, as will appear by and by, that there was no appearance of any such irregularity or excess; seeing the governor was thus capable of distinguishing the relish of the good wine so instantly, which when men have well drunk is not the case; and therefore it is, that, as he says, bad wine is brought last.

But however allowing, 2dly, that the words *when men have well drunk,* did refer to the present guests yet the true meaning of the original word μεθυσθωσι, and its usage in scripture, shews that it signifies not criminal drinking, or drinking to excess: its proper and immediate sense is to drink after sacrificing,* and so it is used in a religious import; and in scripture it is applied to drinking wherein there could be no excess; it is used Gen. xliii. 34. then, when Joseph's brethren were admitted to him, before he had discovered himself, and when they were under too great terrors and apprehensions to fall into any criminal excesses; they drank, we read, and WERE MERRY with him. It is used for spiritual drinking, Cant. v. 1. *I have drunk my wine with my milk: drink, yea* DRINK ABUNDANTLY, *O beloved.* This is that spiritual drinking, of which we can never drink too abundantly: And hence St. Paul exhorts, *be not drunk with wine wherein is excess;* but be *filled with the Spirit.* And for this spiritual and blessed inebriation it is, that Christ offers us the wine of his gospel, of which blessed is he that

* Μεθυω ἀ μετα θυειν, and the LXX in that passage render the Hebrew word by εμεθυσθησαν—and it is well known that the original word שכרו is used frequently for drinking without excess, nay, and for spiritual drinking, as in the text from the Canticles. Beza observes that שכר which answers to the Greek word μεθυειν, is frequently not used in a bad sense, but sometimes signifies the liberal use of wine, without deviating into any excess. See Dr. Whitby's note on the place.

drinketh it new in his kingdom; for *his blood is drink indeed!* "His love is what we are to drink of, and that largely, it being preferable to wine, and may be drunk of without danger plentifully: we may drink, yea be inebriated with love, as the words may be rendered; for here is enough of it, and no fear of receiving any danger by it; and all this together makes up that feast of fat things, *of wines on the lees well refined,* of which the Lord's supper is a representation.*

But 3dly, allowing both these objections to be true, namely that these guests had already drunk well, and that the word, so rendered, doth import criminal drinking, yet it would by no means follow, that the miracle which Christ now wrought was intended to encourage any vice of this sort: far from the mouths of Christians, far from the hearts of men be the least surmise or supposition of such a fact most reasonable it is to conclude, that the change of the water into wine drew off their attention wholly from the feast, to this divine and wonderful person who thus manifested forth his glory, and obtained the faith of those who saw it; most reasonable it is to conclude, that this was a great

* See Gill's exposition of the Canticles on the place above quoted. Erskine in his pretty paraphrase of the Canticles, hath these lines on this text——

Eat, drink, O friends, whom I approve,
I also welcome you;
Yea drink abundance of my love,
Full freedom I allow.
Your fainting spirits here refresh,
With plenty spread abroad:
The grace and love, the blood and flesh
Of your incarnate God!
Not elect angels ever share
Such strange and matchless food:
They feast on their Creator's care,
Not your Redeemer's blood.

means of sobriety and seriousness, bringing the beholders to the usual admiration—*What manner of man is this!* And moreover,—not to insist upon a remark, which an *able writer*† makes, that it seems likely from the text, "that the cup only which was borne to the governor, was changed into wine"—I say, not to insist upon this, to which I must own, there seem many objections, yet to use emphatic words of the same writer, "it should be remembered that the wine here spoken of was not common wine, and therefore has not the least relation to our common drinking; that it was not wine from the juice of the grape; that it had nothing in it but what came from a heavenly hand; that it must have in it the purity and virtue of him that made it: that it had as good qualities in it, and was fitted to have the same effects upon some that drank it, as the clay which he moistened with his spittle had upon the eyes of the blind! It should be remembered, that it was water only, so altered, and endued with such qualities as he pleased to put into it; and therefore we may be sure, that it was water, as highly blest for their use, as they were capable of: we may be sure it was fitter to allay the heat and disorder of drinking, that if it had been water unaltered by our Saviour.*—— Well might it be said of this miracle, that he thereby manifested forth his glory, &c. O holy Jesus, thou didst nothing of thyself, thou soughtest only to manifest thine and thy Father's glory from the be-

† Mr. Law in his answer to Dr. Trapp.

* I omit a sentence here, because it seems to be extremely exceptionable, and because the rest of this writer's observations on this subject are so refined and noble. What he says of this wine changed by our Saviour, finely illustrates the original τον καλον οινον. "Without all doubt, says an ancient writer, the excellence of this wine was such, that the like to it was never drawn from the grape, nor made by any art."

ginning to the end of thy life; thou spentest whole nights in prayer, in mountains and desart places: thou hadst not where to lay thy head: thy common poor fare with thy disciples was barley-bread and dried fishes: thy miraculous power never helped thee to any dainties of refreshment, though ever so much fatigued and fainted with labour; but yet because this holy Jesus came into the world to save all sorts of sinners, and to shew, that every kind and degree of sin could be taken away and forgiven by him, therefore he came into all places, and entered into all sorts of company: he did not, as the Baptist, tie himself to one sort of food, for he came eating and drinking: but why did he so? it was that he might reprove and convert sinners at their own tables; he came not to indulge himself, or to find such gratifications as the Baptist abstained from; but to work miracles, to awaken and astonish sinners in the midst of their indulgences."—And to teach us that the wisdom of the prudent should rather be employed in studying how to improve and amend conversation, than to decline it: for it is a much less virtue to fly from and bid adieu to the world than to live usefully, godly, righteously and soberly in the cheerful discharge of all those social duties for which man is made and fitted.

Wherefore as even in the letter of this miracle there is nothing to countenance the wicked fancies of those, who are so weak and destitute of common sense, as to suppose Christ displaying his glory only to prolong a drunken revel,—let them take heed how they draw any arguments for intemperate festivity from hence, while they are strangers to the spiritual use and application of such divine mysteries, and know not any thing of that holy rejoicing to which the bridegroom invites the bride; *drink abundantly, yea drink O beloved*, and which St. Paul

recommends to all Christians, *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.*

The consequences and fruits of this miracle were the manifestation of the glory of Jesus, and faith in his disciples.—He manifested forth his glory, his own glory, which was never said of any miracle, wrought either by Moses, the prophets or apostles, and is a proof of Christ's true divinity: for the word GLORY, all through the scriptures, is used for the divinity of the second person in the ever blessed Trinity; that glory which united to the manhood gives weight, *an exceeding weight of glory*, to the light scale of human vanity.‡ So that the expression is to the same purport, as if St. John had said, *manifested forth his divinity:* for you will find, by carefully comparing the texts through the Old and New Testament, that the glory of the Lord which manifested itself in the tabernacle, temple, &c. is the same with that glory which manifested forth itself in the temple of a human body: which GLORY Moses desired to see, and could not, but which the aposties and disciples of our Lord saw fully manifested in the life and marvellous works of the Son of God. *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;* which *glory*, let us remember, was therefore manifested, that it might produce the same fruits in all, as in the disciples,—might cause us to believe in him—might raise in our hearts that divine faith which apprehends Jesus as the glory of the Father, and so our only glory, full *of grace and truth.*

‡ Dr. Stanhope expresses himself extremely well on this head —"The word *glory* then applied to Christ, denotes the same God to have exhibited himself to us in this person, who formerly exhibited himself to the Jews in their temple. And by *manifesting forth his glory*, we are to understand that Christ did something which plainly proved his power to be divine, and argued the actual presence of God with and in his human body. See Epistles and Gospels, Vol. ii. p. 75.

Happy will it be for us, if these displays of his divine power bring us to a full resignation of ourselves to him, that his infinite and exceeding glory may add weight to our infinite lightness and deficiency, that his divine merits may counterpoise our numberless wants and great worthlessness, and that saved by his fulness, and made free by his truth, we may ever extol the riches of the one, and for ever be ruled and directed by the dictates and authority of the other.

Having thus explained the literal story, I should now proceed to shew you the practical and spiritual improvement, which you should make hereof; but my present time prevents: Look however, till we meet again, through the letter of this story to that marriage feast, to which Jesus calls all and every one of you here present; and if you have any desire to sit down with the Lamb in his glorious kingdom, comply here upon earth with his command, *Do this in remembrance of me*—drink of his wine freely offered to you, drink of that blood and eat of that body, of which *whosoever eateth and drinketh, he shall never see death*, but enjoy an eternal marriage feast, and live in love and peace unspeakable, with a bridegroom, *who is fairer than the children of men, who is altogether lovely*. Be no longer intent on indulging your taste or any of your sensual appetites: *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:* to attain which, pursue those intellectual and devotional pleasures, which were the meat and drink of our celestial bridegroom while on earth, that so you may patiently wait for, and at length drink of that good wine which he reserves to the last for his people, and for those richer dainties with which he will feast those, who shall drink it new with him in his kingdom of unfading glory, &c.

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE.

PART II.

JOHN ii. 11.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

IN the former sermon on the subject of this first and great miracle which Jesus wrought, I endeavoured to explain to you the literal story in as full and clear a manner as I was able, obviating such difficulties as the corruption of human nature and the perverseness of evil imaginations are willing to raise against it; foolish and blind, to cavil with the works of Omnipotence; weak and impious to reflect upon the sacred character and divine revelation of a holy and undefiled Saviour, *who gave himself* only for this blessed purpose, to deliver fallen mortals from the tyranny of sin, to redeem us from all iniquity, to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, to teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

To this end it was that *he went about doing good,*

having only this single point in view during the time of his public ministry, to do *his Father's work*, to call sinners to repentance and life. And upon this he was equally intent, and to this every place was equally fitted by him, whether it were at a *wedding*, or a *funeral*, whether he were called to Cana in Galilee, or whether to Bethany, where Lazarus lay dead. At either he could equally manifest his glory, and have the same cause of rejoicing for the sake of his disciples; *nevertheless*, said he, *I am glad for you sakes, that I was not there, to the intent that* YE MAY BELIEVE. For this *he manifested forth his glory*, in raising Lazarus from the dead; for this he *manifested forth his glory*, by changing the water into wine; for we read hereupon, that *his disciples believed on him.* This was the grand end and chief purpose of all his mighty works, so to manifest his glory in and by them, as to obtain the faith of the beholders as well as of the hearers of them: for this end pertains to us also, and with this view we should always reflect upon every manifestation of the glory of Jesus, that our faith may be thereby increased; for *blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.*

The present was such a manifestation of his glory, such a proof of his divine power, as we are assured is infinitely beyond the reach of all human abilities, and which was conducted in such a manner as to be incapable of any fraud or deceit; for which purpose he chose to change the water in those water-pots, which were used for the purpose of purifying only, and into which, as was observed before, no wine ever entered; wherein every guest present had washed themselves, and so were convinced of what they contained, and which for the fullest proof were now, by his command, filled with water even to the brim, that every beholder might be a witness of their contents, and that all might

come and see the great quantity of wine transformed by his secret and wonderful power. Though nothing less than Omnipotence could do this, yet as St. Austin beautifully observes, it was as easy for that Omnipotence to do it now without the use of means, as to do it every year by means of moisture extracted from the earth, filtered through the branches of the vine, and having passed through its several stages, swelling in the full ripe grape on the stalk. This is equally miraculous, and equally superior to all the united power of mankind, who can no more form one ripe grape on the vine, than they could change into wine many firkins of water. But as the same father* continues to observe, "Because this hath lost its wonder in the sight of men, by reason of its frequency and repetition, therefore God reserved to himself an unusual way of working, to stir up and awaken, as it were, the sleeping attention of mortals to the useful contemplation of his mighty works in the creation;" and to shew us what we owe to that almighty and beneficent Creator, who, in a natural sense *maketh all things work together for our good; giving us all things richly to enjoy, sending us rain from heaven, and fruitful sea-*

* *Ipse fecit vinum in illo die in nuptiis in sex illis hydriis quas impleri aqua præcipit; qui omni anno hoc facit in vitibus. Sicut enim quod miserunt ministri in hydrias in vinum conversum est, opere Domini: sic & quod nubes fundunt in vinum convertitur ejusdem opere Domini. Illud autem non miramur, quia omni anno fit: assiduitate amisit admirationem. Nam & considerationem majorem invenit, quam id quod factum est in hydriis aquæ. Quis enim est qui considerat opera Dei, quibus regitur & administratur totus hic mundus, & non obstupescit, obruiturque miraculis? si consideret vim unius grani, cujuslibet seminis magna quædam res est, horror est considerantí. Sed quia homines in aliud intenti, perdiderunt considerationem operum Dei, in qua darent laudem quotidie creatori, itaque servavit sibi Deus inusitata quædam, qua faceret, ut tanquam dormientes homines ad se colendum mirabiliùs excitaret.* August. *Tract.* viii. *in Joan. Tom.* ix. *p.* 30.

sons, filling our hearts with food and gladness: and in return for all this beneficence requiring only of men *so to use* these blessings, *as not to abuse them,* to receive them with thanksgiving, and to ascribe the glory and favour of them to the bountiful giver! And yet, see the vile ingratitude of the human race! how are these blessings abused, yea, defiled and polluted to the vilest ends; how is the Creator not only forgot, but shamefully and scandalously reviled and affronted even in and by those very gifts, which he himself hath bestowed; how doth *the whole creation groan and travail in pain together until now!* You need not look far for proofs; epicures, gluttons and drunkards, pamperers of the flesh, and lovers of the wine, when it sparkleth in the glass, are not rare to be met with: temperance and abstemiousness, though the greatest blessings, even in a worldly sense, are very scarce and hard to be found. We abhor the name of an atheist, of a man who is without God in the world; but I pray you, what is this but atheism, atheism of the very worst kind, being without God in the world indeed, and a sure way of being without God in the world to come? Let us, my brethren, act more wisely; and through the glass of the creatures behold and magnify the glory of the Creator; that so we may use them with thanksgiving, returning all the praise to him for the merciful use of his good creatures, and *sanctifying* them to ourselves *by the word of God and by prayer,* bearing always in mind, that we are not born and do not *live* to eat and to drink, but only eat and drink to *live*; a good rule and always to be observed by us.

This is the first practical remark, which I would recommend to you from the general subject of this miracle. The honour and dignity of the marriage state, is the Second thing, which we are taught from hence, and which our church advises, as an

use to be made of this miracle; and that more particularly when we consider it, in a spiritual sense, as signifying the mystical union betwixt Christ and his church. The honour, dignity and happiness of the marriage-state is sufficiently shewn by the first institution of it in paradise, in the time of man's innocency; but an additional blessedness is given to it by the great honour which Christ hath done it, in beautifying and adorning it with his presence, as well as the first miracle that he wrought: but more especially by that high mystery, which through his union with our nature, it now represents and signifies; striking admonitions to us, what they should think of themselves, who dishonour that which God hath determined to honour, *forbidding to marry*, and commanding to abstain from an holy ordinance of God. St. Paul hath directed us what to believe of such and their doctrines; that they are themselves *seducing spirits*, and their doctrines, *doctrines of devils.*

But there are other ways of dishonouring this holy estate, upon which so much of the present comfort, so much of the future happiness of society depends: and these are, 1st, Entering into it, upon wrong, base, and worldly motives, which, alas, is but too commonly done every day, and which is a fountain of perpetual bitterness: 2dly, By living in it without that love and affection, which is essential to the true happiness of the state, in continual brawls and disquietude, that render it very unlike the love and union it is intended to represent, even the love of Christ and his church: 3dly, By breaking the marriage contract, which is the highest offence possible, and the greatest affront to God, dishonouring his ordinance in the last degree, and big with innumerable evils. For the adulterer not only breaks through the laws and sanctions of society, not only transgresses a plain command of the eternal King

of heaven, but is guilty of the highest profanation and irreligion, profaning a temple of God, even his own body, (for our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost,) and irreligiously defiling a sacred mystery which is the source and substance of all our future hopes: cutting himself off from that blessed and future union with Christ, the true bridegroom, who gave himself for his spouse, for every soul! and yet the adulterer horribly disclaims all union with him, and joins himself to that flesh and that sin, which hath for its marriage portion and its marriage joys nothing but flames of hell, and beds of everlasting fire. Thus every act of adultery "desecrates a temple and deflours a mystery:"* and as being the most heinous sin, is also the greatest disgrace and dishonour possible to God's holy ordinance of matrimony. But there are, 4thly, Who no less dishonour it: those, I mean, who in contempt both of the institutor and his institution, live in fornication and uncleanness, and instead of making themselves members of Christ, make their *bodies members of an harlot!* St. Paul puts a *God forbid* to this; and indeed we may well do so to those, who are baptized and call themselves Christians: and yet, alas, how doth this iniquity abound through these Christian realms, men so madly deluding their own souls, as to esteem it venial! If to defile and desecrate a temple be esteemed so horrible a thing that we look upon the wretch who

* To break faith with a wife or husband, says Bishop Taylor, is a divorce from Jesus, and that is a separation from all possibilities of felicity. In the time of the Mosaical statutes to violate marriage was to do injustice and dishonour, and a breach to the sanctions of nature and the first constitutious; but two bands more are added in the gospel to make marriage more sacred; for now our bodies are made temples of the Holy Ghost, and the rite of marriage is made *significant* and *sacramental*, and every act of adultery is profanation and irreligion; *it desecrates a temple and deflours a mystery*. See his *Great Exemplar*, page 219.

doth it, with the greatest abhorrence and abomination, and would scarce bear to be present with a man who should do any act of wickedness and uncleanness in the church or on the altar: why should we look upon those guilty of this vice, or why should they who are guilty of it look upon themselves with less abhorrence and abomination? For they *do desecrate* a temple, they do defile the members of Christ, they crucify him afresh—for what, saith the apostle? Know ye not, that your body is the TEMPLE of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, a price inestimable indeed, even the pure and precious blood of Jesus Christ! Are ye then not shocked to think, that ye shall not only defile this temple of the Holy Ghost, but make these members of Christ, for which he shed his most precious blood, the members of an harlot, and all for a little filthy lust, for a momentary joy, which will torment your souls with everlasting pain in the burning and bottomless pit?—Were this vice less common I should not dwell so particularly upon it, and more especially when, through the iniquity of our times, and the prevalence of the sin, it is become almost ridiculous to speak otherwise than with a kind of approving smile of adulterers and fornicators: when modest cheeks should rather glow into a flame, and true zeal fire the indignant tongue, as ashamed at once both to hear and *to speak of those things that are done of them in secret.*—But I have good hope through the grace of God, and therefore I have spoken, that, if any guilty of this vice hear me, considering its heinous nature, considering that it defiles and pollutes the temple of God, even the Spirit of holiness, that it abuses those members, which the Son of God redeemed, by such unspeakable sufferings, and which he now claims for his own, and

will have used to his glory, that considering it crucifies afresh the Son of God, and puts him to open shame; that reflecting upon these things, they will not madly destroy their own souls, and run headlong into everlasting misery, but follow the same apostle's advice; *flee fornication; for every other sin that a man doth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his body, which yet is not* his own but the temple of the Holy Ghost: wherefore *glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

These are the principal ways by which God is abused in his holy ordinance of matrimony: the best means to reform all which, and to honour him therein, is to do, Thirdly, as this couple at Cana of Galilee did for our example, *invite Jesus to the wedding.* This is a certain way to secure happiness, to have all the water of earthly troubles and afflictions changed into wine, into comfort, peace and serenity. Most Christian writers have been particular in their advices upon this subject, following St. Paul, who gives it as a command, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.* But in truth his command, as well as examples in abundance of the fatal consequences of neglecting it, avail very little in the world, where interest and secular motives are the chief things considered in contracting marriages, and where Christ is generally the only person left out of the invitation; or at least, if other conveniences suit, it is not esteemed of immediate consequence, whether he be present or not: This seldom breaks off matches. How well doth our excellent church advise all her members not, to enterprise or take in hand so momentary a change of circumstances, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding: But reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and *in the fear of*

God."* There can be no doubt of felicity, when *in the fear of God*, this holy estate is entered into, when *Jesus is called to the wedding*. Holy love and heavenly peace will abound in the dwellings of such, and while the mutual love of Christ and his church is made the pattern of their affection, they will go on hand in hand in the cheerful discharge of their duty, and part only for another and a better meeting, a meeting in the kingdom of their heavenly Bridegroom, never, never more to part, but to live through endless ages in the mutual enjoyment of his love and grace unspeakable.

If you desire this present, as well as future happiness, *invite Jesus to your wedding*,† seek and sue to him by fervent prayer for a blessing, live in his love and favour, and then be assured, no worldly things shall ever molest your peace, or destroy your quiet; for you build on a rock. The evil and fatal consequences of omitting so to do, are too plain and obvious in the world to need insisting on: Whence proceed these frequent and numberless breaches in the marriage-contract, this flood of adultery, this coldness and disregard, this want of affection and esteem, these frequent breaches and disquietudes, these quarrels and divisions, "scandalous separations, and more scandalous cohabitings, by which so many families are undone in their fortunes, dishonoured in their blood, tainted with diseases, corrupted in their education, ruined by domestic patterns of vice? These are consequences which no wise man can think strange, where so many matches are made, in which the

* The homily of our church on *matrimony* well deserves a serious perusal.

† It is never too late to invite him, and if you should have been so unhappy as to have contracted a marriage, forgetful of Christ, now remember to invite him, now see to engage him, and interest him in your favour.

true ends of them are never consulted; where wisdom, and virtue, and religion, and agreeableness of tempers and modesty of behaviour, are wholly overlooked, and the beauty and fortune are the only inducements. This may be to call Mammon and Venus, but it is perfectly to shut out Christ and his disciples from the marriage."* And if they be excluded, as two fallen children of fallen Adam meet together, their passions and evil tempers unsubdued and unmortified by grace, they must and will break out into flames; and the evil consequences enumerated above will ensue. And as nothing but grace can subdue these tempers and passions, whatever moral qualifications, out of Christ, we look for and expect, they will be found utterly insignificant, too weak to bind, too impotent to restrain, the evil nature will betray itself. Nothing but Christ, by his divine love and powerful word, can drive out the legion, and speak peace to the winds and storms. But if he be called, if he be a desired and welcome guest, his love will so subdue all evil passions, so incline each one to bear gladly with the other, and so sweeten and soften the unavoidable imperfections of human nature, that they will soon become, as if they really existed not, that they will soon really not exist:—For in this respect also he will change the water into wine: The water of earthly passions into the cheering wine of heavenly affections. Would God the consideration hereof might incline us all to desire his divine presence, keeping our eye fixed upon that of the apostle, *marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge:* yea, they *shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*

Fourthly, We may learn moreover for our practice

* See Stanhope's Epistles and Gospels, vol. ii. p. 77.

a tender and becoming concern for the wants and necessities of our friends, from Mary's solicitude for this young couple. If it be in our power, we are bound to relieve them, when in want, and indeed in all their wants and necessities we have the power of doing what Mary's example suggests, of applying to Christ on their behalf. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:* great are the blessings and promises annexed to faithful prayer: and when as well in the spiritual and temporal needs of others, we apply to Jesus as our only Mediator and Advocate, we need not fear, but that he will at length hear us, that in his good time, and his hour he will supply all our necessities: which though he seemeth to delay, nay, though he should cut us off somewhat harshly, yet we must carefully observe Mary's rule and temper, patiently submit to his divine and better will, and whatsoever he saith unto us, *Do it;* this is the only way to have him shew miracles of mercy on our behalf. We must not dare to prescribe to him times and seasons for assisting us; that must be left to his better wisdom; we must wait for his hour, and his time of assisting us is generally our time of utmost need; when the wine is all out, when all hopes of human aid are gone, then he delights to stretch forth his right hand to save, defend and deliver us. Nor must we think unkindly of Christ, though he bring us to this last hour, though he reduce us to the last extremity: calamities and afflictions are no marks of his hatred, but of his love; whom he loves he chastens. There was wine wanting at the feast where Christ himself was present: frequently the best of Christians are reduced to the lowest state of sufferings, and God hath his good purposes in all these, even the manifestation of his glory.

Fifthly, His gifts are all for use, to be *drawn out;* we must not bury our talent in the earth, but trade

with it, for *there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.* These gifts of the Spirit and of Christ are very different from the gifts of the world, sin and satan, they present us with the very best wine first: Christ keeps the *good wine* till the last. All the delights and pleasures of sin smile upon us, to allure and entice us, at the first, they present us with the most beautiful outside, while within they are like graves full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Milton describes sin as a beautiful woman, fair and lovely to the waist, but

> ———Ending foul in many a scaly fold,
> Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd
> With mortal sting.*———

And Solomon describing the wine of sensual worldly pleasures, uses much the same image; *at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* The world presents us with fair language, promising hopes, convenient fortunes, pompous honours; these are the outsides of the bole: and that vile inveigler and subtle deceiver of souls comes with his base insinuations—*all these things and the glory of them will I give unto thee, if thou wilt only fall down and worship me.* And alas, how many are caught by this bait in the caitiff's trap! But soon as it is down, soon as the bait is swallowed, these dissolve in an instant, and there remains nothing but bitterness, and the malignity of coloquintida:† these fair shows and specious promises melt away like the morning dew, and in their stead the heart feels nothing but the fiery stings of conscience, and the burning fear of hell. Every sin smiles in the first

* Paradise Lost, b. 2. 650.
† See Bishop Taylor's Great Exemplar, p. 220.

address; and like the harlot, *flattery is in its tongue, honey on the lip,* gaudy bravery in its outside attire: but *when we have well drunk, then comes that which is worse; a dart striketh through the liver, when hastening like a bird to the snare, and knowing not that it is for life: they lie down in shame, and their confusion covers them, for they have sinned against the Lord their God: who will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man, that doth evil, that is contentious and obeyeth not the truth. But to these, who by patient continuance in well doing seek for honour, and glory, and immortality,* for those will he reserve the good wine to the last, the good wine of eternal life, and eternal bliss, which they shall drink new with him, in his heavenly kingdom, *when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

But this more properly belongs to the spiritual interpretation of this miracle, which I proposed to give you in the

Third and last place, and which I will do as concisely and clearly as I am able.

The great mystery of the rejection of the Jewish, and the calling of the Gentile church, Christ delivered in a parable, where he tells us, that the *kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. And sent forth his servants to call them, that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come.* Other servants were sent to these same people: but they despised both the messengers and the message: making light of this, and slaying those. The king, enraged hereat, sent forth his armies, and destroyed these murderers and their city. But desirous that the wedding might be furnished with guests, he sent them into the high-ways and hedges, to bid as many as they

should find to the marriage. The invitation was readily accepted by these, and the *wedding* was *furnished* with *guests*. *This king* represents to us God the Father, and *the son* his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he who is the bridegroom, and hath the bride, even those faithful souls who come to the wedding; the Jews represented by those who were first bidden, and refused to come, rejected Christ when he came with his proposals and offers of love to them, cruelly entreated and slew him, as well as such of his servants, those friends of the bridegroom, as he sent to woo them to himself and to his love. Rejected by these, he made his offers of grace to the Gentiles, represented by those in the high-ways and hedges; he sent his servants to invite them, and they readily received and obeyed his heavenly call, closed with his divine proffers, rejoiced to be led into the knowledge of the truth, and to espouse themselves to this all-lovely Bridegroom. And this reprobation of the Jews and election of the Gentiles was the great mystery, the deep decree and counsel of predestination, *hid from ages, kept secret since the world began*, but as St. Paul says, *made manifest after the death of Christ:* And by the scriptures of the prophets, *according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* And indeed the prophets all through speak in the strongest terms of this great mystery of Christ's marrying the adulterous Gentile church, of his taking that wife of fornications to himself, as you will see by consulting the prophets, particularly the livth chapter of Isaiah, where he saith to this church, *Thy maker is thy husband*—and in none more emphatically than in the prophet Hosea, whose name signifies Saviour,* and who was in this respect a

* The learned reader wants no proof hereof: and the unlearn-

strong type of our Redeemer, being commanded of God himself, to take a *wife of whoredoms, to marry a woman an adulteress*, even as Christ married the adulteress flesh, and particularly the Gentile church.† *Plead with your mother, plead*, saith God in this prophet, chap. ii. 2. *Am I not her husband, is she not my wife? let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts*, &c.—ver. 19. *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faith-*

ed one is referred to Mr. Cruden's excellent Concordance, where he will find a very useful explanation of all the proper names in scripture.

† See Hosea i. ii. and iii. It is remarkable that in the genealogy of Christ, out of the four women that are mentioned there, two were adulteresses, Tamar and Bathsheba. Irenæus speaking of the prophet Hosea, says, Christ was manifested to the prophets not only by visions and words, but by actions likewise; that he might by the prophets prefigure and foreshew things to come: for this purpose it was that the prophet Hosea *took a wife of whoredoms*, to shew by that act that the earth had committed *great spiritual whoredom in departing from the Lord;* and that out of this earth God would espouse to himself a church which should be truly sanctified by communion with his Son, as that wife of whoredoms was to be typically by communication with the prophet, as St. Paul says, "The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband." 1 Cor. vii. 14. That which was done typically by the prophet, the apostle shews was really performed by Christ in the church, lib. 4. chap. 37. p. 336.—St. Cyril of Alexandria, vol. i. p. 196, upon Genesis, says, God did these things by his holy prophets from time to time, that in them, as in a lively picture, men might have a view of things to come, delineated as it were before their eyes, and might turn them to their own spiritual advantage. So that the prophet's cohabiting with a wife of whoredoms was a type or figure of God's uniting or associating himself, after a wonderful manner, with that detestable harlot the Jewish church.—I am obliged to the learned labours of the reverend Mr. Merrick for these collections, as well as for many useful hints on this subject, which the reader will find in his sermons on Marriage.

fulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy upon her, that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

This too, as I observed, is that great mystery of predestination, even God's decree from all ages to call and marry in Christ the Gentiles, his elect, of which St. Paul speaks, and of which he writes particularly in the third chapter to the Ephesians, the title of which in our Bibles is, *Of the hidden mystery, that the Gentiles should be saved.*

And as this was the great purpose of Christ's coming in the flesh, and dying upon the cross thus to purchase to himself an universal church by shedding his most precious blood, so is it spiritually figured out to us in this first* or chief miracle, which he wrought in Cana of Galilee: for the great, the principal, and the chief miracle which he wrought was the shedding his blood, and rising again on the *third* day to purchase to himself his spouse the church.—The Holy Ghost informs us, that this marriage in Cana was on the third day; now as there is no word in scripture without its spiritual as well as literal use, so we may be assured that this also was intended to teach us something: and the *third day* both in the Old and New Testament hath reference to the resurrection of Jesus, which was on the *third day,* when having finished his work, having performed the service required, paid his bride's debt, fully satisfied for her offences, and obtained the full power of redemption, he arose from the grave and entered upon his mediatorial office, preparing to celebrate his divine and eternal nuptials, going before, as he said, to provide and make ready those divine and heavenly mansions, which

* Την ΑΡΧΗΝ των Σημειων.

are in his Father's house, for the reception of his beloved spouse. Speaking of the *third day*, he himself says, *Behold I do cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected*, τελειωμαι— "wholly completed, fitted and consecrated to my office of mediator, *to have all power in heaven and in earth.*" And the prophet Hosea, speaking of Christ, says, *after two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight*, for when he was raised up from the dead, his bride, even all faithful souls were raised up with him, for he is the head, and *we are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. This is a great mystery*, saith St. Paul, *but I speak concerning Christ and his church.*

And as the Holy Spirit informs us of the *day* of this divine wedding, so doth he also of the *place*, *Cana of Galilee*, upon which much stress seems to be laid; for you may observe that it is repeated, both at the beginning and end of the narration. For this I will use the words of the learned St. Cyril, "Here again, says he, let the intelligent reader observe, that the marriage was not celebrated in Jerusalem, but without Judea, to the end that it might be the country of the Gentiles: for Galilee was of the Gentiles, as the prophet speaks:§ and, hereby was manifestly intimated, that the Jewish church would reject Christ the bridegroom from heaven, but that the Gentile would very readily receive him: for Christ did not go to this marriage of his own accord, an unbidden guest; but was invited by many believers: moreover there was a deficiency of wine to the guests, which intimated that the law

§ Matt. iv. 12. Jesus departed into Galilee;—and why so?—*That it might be fulfilled*—which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying—Galilee of the Gentiles, the "people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." See Isai. ix. 1, 2.

made nothing perfect, the writings of Moses did not suffice to create spiritual joy; but Christ hath shewn us a wine which is much better than the first (under the law); for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. The good things of the law have no perfection in themselves, but the gospel dispensation is the completion of the blessings promised therein.

And to shew that the Jews would not only reject but be rejected of him, Jesus at this wedding, rebuked his mother, and said, *what have I to do with thee?* shewing to the Jews that the outward privileges they stood upon, and the relationship which they boasted that they bore to God, who, they said, was their Father—was no argument for presuming upon his power; since he would forsake them, as they had forsaken him, to take unto himself a spouse from the Gentiles. For generally in marriages there is a *forsaking; a man*, saith the scripture, *shall leave father and mother*, and cleave to his wife, as the wife must do in return; so Christ did forsake, did leave his heavenly Father's bosom, to marry human nature, and he forsook his mother the Jewish church, to marry that of the Gentiles, which in return was to forsake all her idols and all her abominations, before her maker could be her husband.

There were set at this wedding *water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews*;—and the water in these he turned into wine, to shew, that all the typical washings and purifications of the Jews were to terminate in his blood, and, as it were, to be changed into it: that all their ceremonies and services should cease, and be completed and verified in that great sacrament, his death upon the cross, which is the life, the sum and substance of the gospel sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This water made wine was to be presented to the

Governor of the feast, who here, as the King in the parable just before spoken of, represented God the Father, who receives this *good wine* of his Son's blood, accepts and approves of it, and declares himself well pleased with it, as being far better than the wine offered at first, than all the typical services, and all the blood shed in sacrifice, which could never make the *Comers thereunto perfect*, and with which he declares himself *not well pleased*.* This *good wine Christ kept to the last*, till these *last times*, namely, of the gospel dispensation, (in which sense, last times is commonly used in the scripture,) and shed it upon the cross for the sake of sinners, to purchase to himself and to cleanse by this purifying stream, *that church*, which, as writers observe, proceeded from his wounded side in the mystic stream of blood and water, when he hung dead upon the cross, as Eve was taken from Adam's side when he lay asleep in the garden ;† and from which

* See the 9th and 10th chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews. Quesnelle in his reflections on the 10th verse of the 2d chapter of St. John, observes, God gave at the first the old *wine* of the law without strength, spirit or taste; and in the fulness of time he gave the new *wine* of a strong and powerful grace, which enables us to fulfil the law, which inebriates the heart in a holy manner and causes it to forget all present things. Let us desire, pray for and taste this *wine* of our heart, which is so necessary to our salvation.—This is the wine of the marriage of the Lamb, a marriage begun in the incarnation, by the union of the WORD with our NATURE; continued and brought to perfection in the sanctification of sinners, by their being incorporated with Christ, finished and consummated in heaven, by the union of all the elect with their head, and the completion of the adoption of God's children in the bosom of the Father!—Theophylact on the place explains it in much the same manner. Vol. i. p. 687, Δυνασαι δε νοησαι οινον, &c. By the wine you may understand the gospel; by the water, all the dispensations before it, &c. See the author.

† This is the unanimous voice of all the fathers, of all the best and most ancient writers of the church—"As the sleep of Adam, says Tertullian, was a type of the death of Christ, so Eve coming forth of the side of Adam prefigured the procession of the church;

event, all through the Old Testament,—the books of Moses, the psalms, the prophets,—as well as the New, quite to the end of the Revelation, even to the Marriage-supper of the Lamb, this similitude is used, and this holy estate of matrimony consecrated to represent to us the spiritual marriage and union which is betwixt Christ and his church; insomuch that I do not know of any relation wherein the Holy Ghost so much delighteth to represent our Redeemer to us, as under this of our near *Kinsman*,† who took our nature to become thus near to us that he might betroth and espouse us to himself in love.

This first miracle of our Lord's was intended to signify this in general, but to unfold in particular the hidden mystery of Christ's marrying the Gentile church, which he purchased by his own blood, *that they who were sometimes far off, might be made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us* (and the Jews), *having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and to them that were nigh.* And this saving dispensation, so happy for us who are of the Gentiles, we are bound to commemorate with thankful hearts, and with believing souls to contemplate this manifestation of his glory, the greatest which he could possibly give us, and which if it fails to excite our faith and love, we have great reason to tax ourselves with hardness and baseness of heart.

that true mother of all truly living, from the wounded body of our Lord." *De Anima.* cap. xliii. p. 593.

† See Ruth ii. 1. iii. 12, 13, &c. and Deut. xxv. 5, &c.

For did it not shew the greatest love to us miserable sinners, that the Son of the Most High should leave his Father's bosom, and in much meanness and humility condescend to dwell upon earth, to live in this wretched world, to live a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and at length after sufferings, the most grievous and intolerable to human nature, to lay down his life a ransom for ours, to pay our debt and satisfy for our sins, by the bitterest agonies on the accursed tree; what lover could shew his love more? Well might he say, *greater love than this hath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friends!*—and as thus he fully manifested his love to us, so he no less manifested his glory, when after his body had been mangled, his hands and feet transfixed to the cross, and his precious side pierced with the spear, yet on the *third day* he arose triumphant from the grave; his wounds all healed, his heavenly body refined and fitted for glory, and himself so perfected, as to have finished the work for which he came, as to have wrought his beloved bride's deliverance, as to be ready to receive and take her to his heavenly embraces! This was indeed a stupendous manifestation of his glory: but it is more stupendous still, when we reflect what poor, wretched, worthless sinners we are, for whom the Son of God hath done so much, and to whom his loving heart is so much inclined! O sinner, doth not his uncommon love to thee beget some yearnings of affection, some tender feelings towards this heavenly bridegroom, who hath a place for thee in his heart, and who wooes thee with all the warmth of love to his bosom and delights!—Did some mighty prince, enamoured with love to an earthly beauty, who on account of the greatness of her debt which she was unable to pay, was confined to a doleful prison, and condemned to grievous sufferings from a merciless ty-

rant,—did he submit for her sake to lie in that doleful dungeon many years, where otherwise she must have lain for ever; did he submit to be scourged and tortured in her stead; did he offer to receive her, though covered with filthy and defiling rags, and all over uncleanness; did he present her with costly robes and deck her in the finest ornaments, place her on the throne with himself, and admit her to his bed and bosom;*—think you, that his generous treatment would not engage her heart?—Which of you, supposing you were that prince's bride, would not love him with all your soul, and strive to please and delight him with all your power?—your hearts I am sensible, bound with gratitude even at the thought—nothing, nothing, you think, could ever be sufficient to make such a benefactor amends!——Now then, *you* have all such a benefactor!—Nay, one as much superior to what I have been hinting, as an eternal God to a perishing man!—Christ hath in reality done this, yea and ten times more, out of his unbounded love to each of our souls; he hath not only *lived*, lived in a prison, a dungeon, far from his native kingdom and his celestial home, he hath not only *suffered*, suffered tortures beyond what heart can think or pen describe; but he hath *died*, died the most ignominious and painful death for us! His love was stronger than death! He hath lain in prison, he hath lived in the dungeon of this world, he hath suffered stripes and scourges, he hath endured all the curse of the law, all the agonies of a bloody sweat, a torturing cross, a crown of thorns, the taunts of sinners, the reproaches of enemies, the desertion of nearest and dearest friends; and all this—not for those who had any beauty or comeliness to recommend them, but for miserable beg-

* See the xvith chapter of the prophet Ezekiel.

gars, spotted over and defiled with sin, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot—all this for thy sake, O sinner, all this to redeem thee from the curse of the law, under which thou liest, from the power of Satan, by which thou art strongly bound, from the sentence of death, under which thou art condemned, and from the eternal punishment, which is to be inflicted on those, who accept not his grace. And after all this endured for thee, if thou wilt but come to him, though never so much defiled, though never so much polluted, he will receive and cleanse thee from all thy filthiness, deliver thee from the power of the law, sin, death and hell, *and clothe thee with the garments of salvation, he will cover thee with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decking thee with ornaments, and as a bride adorned with her jewels.* And having done this, he will espouse himself to thee in much faithfulness and love; he will give thee the most comfortable presents, the sweetest earnests of his love, till the blessed consummation-day, even his holy Spirit, that faithful friend of the bridegroom, who will display his graces to thee, and *bring to thy remembrance* all his tender words and endearing speeches: many kind visits will he himself make thy soul; a sweet foretaste shalt thou have of his pleasures in the sacrament of his body and blood; and perpetual delight and joy in perusing his letter of love, his divine word of promise, which shall be sweeter than the honey-comb to thy soul, and which thou wilt never lay aside, but hold near to thy heart in his long absence; and when it shall please him to hasten thy desired wedding-day, to come and take thee to his arms and home for ever, then thou shalt drink of that GOOD WINE, which he keeps till the last, that wine, which is infinitely raised in flavour above all earthly draughts; thou shalt be ta-

ken into those blissful mansions, which thy faithful bridegroom went before to prepare, and to welcome thee into which he shall come in his marriage-robes, adorned with all his glory on the great day: when taken up with him to thy eternal home and his eternal love, thou shalt taste such pleasures, and drink of such rivers of delight, *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man* to conceive, much less to express!

And need I then, as the friend and messenger* of this bridegroom, sent by him to woo and win your souls to his heart, and your own happiness—need I entreat you to close with him, to strike the bargain, to accept his offer, to betroth yourselves to him in faithfulness and love?‡ This offer is

* "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, *we pray* you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God!"—The persuasion and beauty of this text can scarce be resisted, one would hope, by any thinking person that reads it.

‡ There is something so remarkably sweet and persuasive in the following little hymn of Herbert's, and which gave me so great pleasure, when writing on this subject, that I cannot prevail with myself to omit it, as hoping it may please the reader no less than it hath done me.

1 B.

Sweetest Saviour, if my soul
Were but worth the having,
Quickly I should then control
Any thought of waving:
But when all my care and pains,
Cannot give the name of gains,
To thy wretch so full of stains;
What delight or hope remains?

2 C.

What, child, is the balance thine,
Thine the poise and measure?
If I say, thou shalt be mine;
Finger not my treasure.
What the gains in having thee
Do amount to, only he,
Who for man was sold, can see:
That transferr'd th' accounts to me.

made to all amongst you, *come to the wedding for all things are ready:* and Oh, that I could so invite, so display the love, the graces, the beauties of this heavenly JESUS, as to win all your souls to a marriage union with him! And surely there is in nothing so much room, since, say all we can, we can never say enough, so much is he above all praise, so much is he above all commendation; for this is no mortal perishing husband, subject to infirmities, caprice, dislike or change; but *thy husband is thy maker, the Lord of hosts is his name,* the eternal King of heaven and earth, he whose word spoke all this world into being, he who gave to man his wonderful body, and breathed into him his still more wonderful and immortal soul: he who could say to the roaring winds, *peace;* and to the raging sea, *be still:* he who broke the iron bars of death, and rose triumphant into heaven: he, before whom thrones, dominations and powers bow their heads, giving glory and honour, might, majesty, and dominion for ever and ever: he who knows not any change, who loves with an eternal and immutable love, and who *with an everlasting kindness will have*

3 B.

But as I can see no merit
Leading to this favour:
So the way to fit me for it
Is beyond my savour.
As the reason then is thine,
So the way is none of mine,
I disclaim the whole design;
Sin disclaims and I resign.

4 C.

That is all, if that I cou'd
Get without repining:
And my clay, my creature wou'd
Follow my resigning.
That as I did freely part
With my glory and desert,
Left all joys to feel all smart.
——*Ah—no more: thou break'st my heart!*

mercy: who continues the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever: and whose divine word of promise and letter of love to us shall never fail; *heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of his word shall never pass away!* Wish you to be married to a spouse of great dignity and high honour?—Behold, Christ is ready to enter into your heart as his bridal chamber: and no dignity can equal his, for he is *King of kings and Lord of lords,* he is *highly exalted, and hath obtained a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth.* Wish you a spouse full of wisdom and knowledge? Christ is the *wisdom of God: grace is poured into his lips, never man spake like this man; his mouth is most sweet: yea, in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:** Wish you a spouse for loveliness and beauty? *Behold he is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, fairer than the children of men, his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars, as the sun shining in his strength; his* beauty far surpassing all idea: in sum *he is altogether lovely!* Wish you a spouse with love to return the warmth of your affection? O here indeed Christ far surpasses all description! St. Paul who was well acquainted with his love, declares the *breadth,* and *length,* and *depth,* and *height* of it to be far beyond all human knowledge: nay, *he is love itself;* read the writings of his beloved disciple, that sweet suitor of this celestial bridegroom, and there you will be enamoured of his love! But to see it in all its beauty, to behold it in all its fulness, to behold him in all his graces, in his most winning form, when all *the virgins* that behold and see, will bless and *love him*; look, faithful soul, turn thine

* See 1 Cor. i, 24. Col. ii. 3. John vii. 46. For the most

eye to Calvary's mount, there see thy love crucified, there see thy love stretched out in sorrow inexpressible, for thee; there see him, meek Lamb of God, silently suffering for thy sake; there hear him praying for his adversaries; there see him breathing out his soul for thee, and never henceforth dare to doubt of his love, who thus died to witness it, who thus died to *espouse thy soul as a chaste virgin to himself:* and never, never, O man, presume to refuse him thy heart, who thus shed his heart's dearest blood for thy wretched sinful sake!

As no greater misery can befal us than to despise this love, and to refuse this divine union with Christ; as no greater hell can be hereafter than the loss of this Redeemer's love and favour throughout all eternity; and as no stronger motives can be offered to incline you to close with him, and to give up yourselves, your souls and bodies in true faith to him, than the foregoing reflections on his infinite love to us:—I will leave you with this impression on your minds, and may the Spirit of God imprint it deeply on all your hearts! I will have good hope, my beloved brethren, that you will seriously consider these things: that you will not be insensible to your soul's welfare, and so in love with everlasting woe, as to have no regard to an eternal state; but that you will each one resolve to become the spouse of Christ that you may live blessed here in the sense of his endearing affection and regard, and infinitely blessed hereafter in the full fruition of his inexhaustible pleasures and goodness; the only way to secure which, is to discharge that duty, which he enjoins his spouse, to be loving and faithful, giving him all your hearts, and permitting no

complete description of Christ I must refer the reader to the xlvth psalm, the vth chapter of the Canticles from ver. 9 to the end, and the first chapter of the Revelation from ver. 13.

other loves to have any place in them, and to be obedient to him in all things; *for ye are my friends,* saith he, my beloved spouse, *if ye do whatsoever I command you.* Carry yourselves, therefore, thus *loving, faithful* and *obedient* to your heavenly Bridegroom, in all *quietness, sobriety* and *peace,* and he will love, nourish, cherish and sanctify you, that you may be *holy, and without blemish,* and on the glorious day of the consummation of your heavenly nuptials, you shall hear the triumphant song of all the host of heaven, congratulating you, singing and saying, *Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him—for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb*—which, &c.

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